

IT ALL BEGAN WITH A STILL

The Story of Oliver and Mary Tidball Miller

By William W. Barton

In connection with the bicentennial celebration of the Whiskey Rebellion, it is perhaps appropriate to document the family of Oliver and Mary Tidball Miller. It was on the farm of their son, William Miller, that the first shots of the Whiskey Rebellion were fired on 15 July 1794.¹ The first man killed in the Whiskey Rebellion was their grandson Oliver(3) Miller, Alexander(2), Oliver(1) following the 16 July attack on Gen. John Neville's home.² Their son Thomas Miller was charged in Philadelphia 6 May 1795 for treason at Neville's house. Thomas was eventually acquitted.³ Not all of Oliver and Mary's children actively opposed the whiskey tax. Their son James Miller, for instance, on 15 November 1794, "took and subscribed the oath of Allegiance as prescribed by an address of his Excellency General Henry Lee to the Inhabitants of the four western Counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, dated the 8th day of November 1794."⁴

OLIVER MILLER, Sr. was possibly born in County Antrim, Ireland, ca. 1720; died Feb/Mar 1782 in Peters Twp., Washington Co. (now South Park, Allegheny Co.) PA; buried on James Rhode's farm. He married in W. Nottingham Twp., Chester Co., PA, 9 Apr. 1744 Mary Tidball.

Oliver was probably the son of Alexander (aka Sanders) and Mary Miller. The basis for this statement is Alexander's 20 February 1765 will in which he bequeaths 20 shillings to his son Oliver. When he wrote his will Alexander stated that he was of Bedminster Twp., Bucks Co., PA, but his will was probated 28 Oct. 1765 in Northampton Co.⁵ Alexander was buried at the Presbyterian Church of Lower Mount Bethel Twp., Northampton Co., near the village of Martin's Creek.⁶ A rubbing of his tombstone reads "Here lies the body of Alexander Miller. He died 5 day of September A.D. 1765 in ye 84th year of his age."⁷ Circumstantial evidence linking this Alexander Miller to Oliver included:

- Oliver named his first son Alexander.
- When Oliver's youngest son, James, finally patented his father's homestead in Allegheny Co. in 1796 he named it *Mansfield*. On 8 July 1790 a patent for land also called *Mansfield* had been issued to an Alexander Miller who was a nephew of the Alexander (Sanders) Miller above.⁸
- The Alexander Miller who patented *Mansfield* in Northampton Co. married a Jane Lyle. Her brother Robert had a daughter Sarah who married Joseph Smith Wallace (Mary Miller, Oliver).⁹
- Rev. John Clark was pastor of the Mt. Bethel Presbyterian Church of Northampton Co. 1762 – 1767 (i.e. when Alexander was buried there). He was also pastor 1783 – 1794 of the Bethel Presbyterian Church in Allegheny Co. where Oliver's children worshipped¹⁰
- The only Miller listed in the 1737 – 1740 tax lists for W. Nottingham Twp., Chester Co., was an Alexander. Unfortunately the lists for 1741 – 1746 are lost. But in the

1747 list, Alexander had departed (to Bucks County?) and was replaced by *Olifer* Miller. Oliver's name appears on the lists through 1750. There are no lists for 1751 and 1752, and the list for 1753 shows no Oliver Miller¹¹

MARY TIDBALL was the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Brownhill Tidball. Mary's sister Alice was the mother of the Major Abraham Kirkpatrick who aided Gen. Neville's escape from the 17 July 1794 attack on his house.¹² Mary was born 22 December 1723, near Marcus Hook, Lower Chichester Twp., Chester Co., PA. As a wedding gift, she received from a Philadelphia friend a jar filled with figs with the covenant that the jar be passed on to the youngest daughter at the time of her marriage.¹³ Inscribed in the Miller Bible is the entry "Oliver Miller & Mary Miller was Married Apriel mix 1744."¹⁴ Apparently the scribe changed the marriage date from April 20 to April 9 to account for the eleven days lost when the switch was made from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar.

In 1750 the Oliver Miller family moved from W. Nottingham Twp. in the southwest corner of Chester Co. across the vaguely defined PA/MD border into the Nottingham Lots area of Cecil Co., MD. Here Oliver operated a store. His 47 page double-entry ledger book for the years 1750-1756 provides considerable data on his customers, the barter items they used and the purchases they made, which were chiefly rum.¹⁵

About 1761 the Oliver Miller family moved west to Frederick (now Washington) Co. MD where late in 1764 Oliver patented *Miller's Range* (50 acres) and *Worth Little* (20 acres) in Conococheague Manor. Oliver was listed as being from Cecil Co., MD, and York Co., PA, respectively in these two patents.¹⁶

The Oliver Miller family next located in Friend's Cove, Colerain Twp., Cumberland (now Bedford) Co., PA. On 2 May 1767 Oliver made application for a warrant for 200 acres of land lying between the lands of Robert Moore and John Friend.¹⁷ On 16 July 1775 he sold this land (actually 100 acres) to John Friend for 72 pounds.¹⁸ Oliver paid taxes in Bedford Twp., Cumberland Co. in 1767, in Colerain Twp., Cumberland Co., 1768-1770, and in Colerain Twp., Bedford Co., 1773-1775.¹⁹

Oliver and his older sons Alexander, Thomas, and John appear on the 1773 tax list for Rosstraver Twp., Bedford Co.²⁰ The only one of them who paid a significant tax there was Thomas. He was listed as an inmate (i.e. a married man who was not a land holder). Probably Thomas was the only member of the Miller family who actually lived in Rosstraver Twp., now Westmoreland Co.

On 4 July 1772 "Silas Dackster (Dexter) living near Peters Creek between Fort Pitt and some part of Monogela River, Planter," for 39 pounds sold to Oliver Miller, Sr., of Friends Cove, Bedford Co., "Planter and Distiller," all his improvements and claim on the land on which the Oliver Miller homestead now stands in South Park, Allegheny Co. Silas Dexter probably had a West Augusta District, VA claim to this land.

It was not long before Oliver Miller's name began to appear in the ongoing controversy between Pennsylvania and Virginia for control of this area. On 11 Jan. 1774 Oliver Miller of Mingo Settlement was "commissionated" by Lt. Gov. Richard Penn to be a justice of the peace for the for the Westmoreland Court of General Quarter Sessions and for the County Court of Common Pleas.²¹ But by 22 Feb. 1775 Oliver Miller was appointed by the VA court held at Fort Dunmore, Pittsburgh, to view a road.²² At the courts held in Pittsburgh for the District of West Virginia, he was on 24 Feb. 1775 named foreman of the Grand Jury and was on 20 Aug. 1776 recommended to be added to the Commission of Peace. The Virginia court was then transferred to Augusta Town (now Washington, PA). Here Oliver was commissioned a Justice of the Peace on 23 Dec. 1776, the first day of business for Yohogania Co., VA. He continued to be an active judge as long as the court of justice was held under Virginia jurisdiction within the limits of old Washington Co.²³

Oliver Miller wrote his will 3 Feb. 1782. It was probated 12 Mar. 1782. He appointed his wife Mary and her brother William Tidball executors. To his youngest son, James, he willed the plantation "I do Now live on." James was to support his younger sister, Mary, until she came of age and to pay her 30 pounds when she became 18. To his wife and sons Thomas, John, and William he willed nearby land. To his son Oliver he willed "my still and all the vessels thereunto belonging and still house." Son John was to pay 5 pounds "to my Grand Son Oliver Miller when he is Eighteen years of age (son of Alexander Miller)." To his son William he willed "the third part of all my land (when gained) that lies over In the forks of Monnongohala & Yohaganian Rivers and the remainder part to be *Equally* Divided Between John Coughern (Cochran), Alex. Miller, Thos. Miller, Jno. Miller, Robt. McKee, Jno. Boyer, Oliver Miller, Jas. Miller, Mary Miller Legateer²⁴In the 19 Sept. 1786 accounting of their administration, executors William Tidball and Mary Miller showed a balance of 236 pounds 7 pence subject to distribution and \$5,012 of Virginia State Money, the value not known."²⁵

Oliver's widow, Mary Miller, lived until 1813, the last years with her youngest daughter, Mary, and Mary's husband, William Wallace. She was buried in the Cross Creek Graveyard, Washington Co.²⁶

The children of Oliver and Mary Miller:

1. SARAH MILLER

Sarah was born 27 Jan. 1745 in W. Nottingham Twp., Chester Co., PA. She married before 1767 John Cochran, son of Andrew & Mary Cochran.²⁷ John & Sarah settled in what is not Hamiltonban Twp., Adams Co., PA John died between 22 Sept. 1783 and 23 Mar. 1784, leaving his estate to his wife Sarah, his five sons William, Andrew, James, John & Oliver, and his daughter Mary.²⁸ John's dwelling plantation was held by a Maryland right.²⁹ The 1790 York Co. census listed Sarah Cochran head of a household consisting of two males, sixteen or over (i.e. sons William & Andrew), three males less than sixteen (i.e. sons James, John, & Oliver) and two females (i.e. Sarah & daughter Mary).³⁰ Sarah died in 1813.

2. ALEXANDER MILLER

Alexander was born 25 Feb. 1747 in W. Nottingham Twp., Chester Co., PA. He married before 1782 Jean (-?-). On 6 Jan. 1786 Alexander had surveyed in what is not Bethel Twp., Allegheny Co., 337 acres & 32 perches of land in pursuance of a Virginia certificate. On 22 Feb. 1799 he was granted a PA patent on this land. He named it *Millmount*.³¹ In the 1790 Federal Census for the portion of Allegheny Co. taken from Washington Co. Alexander *Millar* was head of a household consisting of one male 16 or over (i.e. Alexander), two males under 16 (i.s. Oliver & Alexander, Jr. and seven females (i.e. his wife Jean & his six daughters).³² On 17 Aug. 1821 Alexander Miller of St. Clair Twp. Sold 100 acres of *Millmount* to his youngest child Thomas for \$1.00.³³ On 4 Mar. 1824 Alexander wrote his will. It was probated 23 Mar. 1831. In his will he cited his sons Alexander and Thomas and his daughters Mary Dick, Sarah Jewell, Agness Miller, Jane Jewell, Rachel Tidball, & Ruth Miller.³⁴ Apparently his wife, Jean, had predeceased him, and was stated near the beginning of this article, his son Oliver also predeceased him.

3. THOMAS MILLER

Thomas was born 26 May 1749 in W. Nottingham Twp., Chester Co., PA. He married before 1773 Mary (-?-) who was born about 1756. Thomas and Mary had at least one child, John, born 17 June 1777.³⁵ On 8 Jan. 1782 Thomas was a private in Capt. Zadock Wright's Co. of Militia in the Second PA Battalion along with his brothers John and William, Silas Dexter, and Thomas and James Kildue (Kiddoo).³⁶ Thomas received pay for his services as a private in the Rangers of the Frontier in the period 1778-1783.³⁷ On 10 Oct. 1794 he witnessed a deed from his brother William to Thomas Kiddoo.³⁸ On 13 Nov. 1794 Thomas was arrested in connection with the Whiskey Rebellion incident at Gen. Neville's home.³⁹ He was marched to Philadelphia where he was held in jail until May of the following year when he was acquitted. By 1796 he had departed Pennsylvania for Kentucky with his brothers John and William. In the 19 Nov. 1796 issue of the *Kentucky Gazette* Thomas Dobyns, sheriff of Mason Co., KY advertised lands of Thomas, John, and William Miller to be sold to satisfy overdue taxes.⁴⁰ On 24 Feb. 1798 Thomas bought 70 acres on Locust Creek from John Hughes & wife and on 18 May 1803 he bought 150 acres on Fleming Creek from John Burns, both tracts in Fleming Co., KY.⁴¹ Thomas probably died before the 1820 census was taken.

4. JOHN MILLER

John was born 6 Feb. 1753 in Cecil Co., Md. He married Margaret Bowier (Boyer?). In 1774 John and his brother William served in the PA Militia against the Indians.⁴² On 5 Oct. 1775 they were each paid 13/1/0 pounds for 174 days of service in Lord Dunmore's War per Capt. John Robertson's Roll.⁴³ John enlisted with his brother William in the 8th PA Regiment "about 13 Aug. 1776 at a place in the Red Stone Country called Peter's Creek

about 10 miles from Pittsburgh.” They served three years during the Revolutionary War.⁴⁴ On 5 Jan. 1786 John had surveyed in Snowden Twp., Allegheny Co., 286 acres & 71 perches of land in pursuance of a Virginia certificate. On 29 Sept. 1788 he was granted a PA patent on this land. He named it *Millford*.⁴⁵ In the 1790 Federal Census for the portion of Allegheny Co. taken from Washington Co., John Miller was head of a household consisting of one male 16 or over, one male under 16, and two females.⁴⁶ John & Margaret sold 123 acres & 55 perches of *Millford* to David Morgan for 150 pounds on 22 Mar. 1792.⁴⁷ They sold the remainder of *Millford* to William McElehany for 430/15/- pounds on 7 Oct. 1796.⁴⁸ They then removed to Kentucky, buying 79 acres on Fleming and Locust Creeks for 118/10/- on 24 Feb. 1798 and 70 acres on Locust creek for 60 pounds on 29 Dec. 1799, all from John Hughes.⁴⁹ About 25 Sept. 1834, John & Margaret removed to Rush Co., IN. He died 10 Dec. 1836. John and Margaret had ten children, viz: William, John, Sarah, Kichen, James, Jane Elison, Polly Hillis, Nathan, Oliver, Josiah, and Alexander.⁵⁰

5. ELIZABETH MILLER

Elizabeth was born 1 Feb. 1755 in Cecil Co., MD. She married Robert McKee, another early settler of Washington Co. On 5 Oct. 1785 Robert had 417 acres & 66 perches of land surveyed in St. Clair Twp., Allegheny Co. On 9 Jan. 1798 he obtained a patent for the land which he called *Deformity*.⁵¹ On 16 June of the same year he sold 100 acres of *Deformity* to Adam Hill for 90 pounds.⁵² At the time of his death (before 22 Apr. 1838) Robert still owned the remaining 317 acres of *Deformity*. Since Robert died intestate, “twelve free, honest and lawful men of his bailiwick” were appointed to value his land, which they did at \$3,804.⁵³ The children of Robert & Elizabeth were John, Mary Kennedy, dec’d., William, James, Thomas, & Guion. Apparently Robert’s wife, Elizabeth, predeceased him.

6. WILLIAM MILLER

William was born 15 Jan. 1757 in Cecil Co., MD. He married Rachel [?]. In 1774 he and his brother John served in the PA Militia against the Indians. Again with his brother John, William enlisted as a private in the 8th PA Regiment about 13 Aug. 1776. On 6 Jan. 1777 they departed Kittanning for New Jersey. Here they joined the 5th Co., of Daniel Morgan’s “Rangers” under the command of Capt. Van Swearingen. They marched to Saratoga, NY, where their marksmanship expertise with their Kentucky rifles was instrumental in the defeat of Gen. Burgoyne. William & John then returned to the 8th PA Regiment. They were discharged late in 1779.⁵⁴ At the 1785 estate sale of his deceased brother Oliver, William bought for 25 pounds the still and vessels that Oliver had inherited from their father.⁵⁵ William patented *Millville* on Peters Creek for 226 acres and 95 perches 27 July 1793 in pursuance of a warrant dated 3 Sept. 1790 and a survey dated 12 Mar. 1793.⁵⁶ As reported above, the first shots of the Whiskey Rebellion were fired 15 July 1794 on William’s farm when the U.S. Marshall, Major David Lenox, and the regional supervisor for collection of the federal excise tax, Gen. John Neville, attempted to serve a summons ordering William to set “aside all manner of business and excuses” and appear before the judge of the District Court in Philadelphia on August 12 for failure to register his still.⁵⁷ William was understandably upset at the thought of having to pay a \$250

fine and to appear in Federal Court in Philadelphia, particularly since he was planning to remove to Kentucky that fall. According to Hugh Brackenridge's later conversation with William, "William had been a principal in the two attacks upon the house of the Inspector" (i.e. Gen. Neville).⁵⁸ William was opposed to signing an 11 Sept. amnesty promising not to oppose an excise tax on distilled spirits. When Gen. Henry Lee on 29 Nov. proclaimed a pardon to all persons involved in the Whiskey Rebellion disturbances, William was one of 34 persons excepted from the pardon. In a 24 Dec. 1794 letter to Judge Addison, District Attorney W. Rawle stated that his reasons for excepting William Miller were that he was "active at Neville's and opposed signing the paper; very contemptuous of the laws and processes of the United States."⁵⁹ William was not present at the 5 May 1795 Philadelphia trial at which a grand jury found the charge of guilty of treason at Neville's house against him to be a true bill. In a 5 Aug. 1795 letter to Judge Addison, District Attorney Rawle stated that William Miller was among 15 persons remaining to be tried upon the bills found. But before an order to arrest him was issued, William had departed the area. On 9 June 1794 William & Rachel Miller of Mifflin Twp. had sold 150 acres of *Millville* for 112/10/- pounds to Conrad Sailor, executor of the estate of Peter Sailor, dec'd. And on 10 Oct. 1794 they had sold the remaining 76 acres and 95 perches for 75 pounds to Thomas Kiddoo.⁶⁰ Shortly afterwards, it is believed, William and his wife and four young children floated down the Ohio river in a flatboat to limestone (now Maysville), KY. They settled in what is now Fleming Co. In the 1810 census William was head of a family consisting of 3 males under 10, 2 males 10-16, 3 males 16-26, and 1 female 45 & over.⁶¹ In 1818 William applied for a pension and purchased some land. The pension was denied and as a consequence William was unable to meet the payments for the land and was compelled to give it up without receiving title.⁶² On 24 May 1825 William Miller purchased 544 acres on Fleming Creek from Martin P. Marshall & wife.⁶³ But in 1827 he sold almost all of it to his children. Once he had disposed of his land he applied for reinstatement of his pension on 3 Nov. 1828, stating that he possessed only \$40.50 of property. His application did not meet with success. On 10 Aug. 1832 William again applied for a pension. This time he was successful and he received an annual pension retroactive to 4 Mar. 1831. In 1835 William & Rachel removed to Pike Twp., Marion Co., IN "because his children had moved" to that area. William died there sometime between 1838 & 1842.⁶⁴ Rachel died before 1850. Their children were John, Elizabeth Hulse, Alexander, Mary, Mrs. Talbot R. Thurman, Thomas, Joseph, Campbell, Clark, Sarah Mark, and possibly William Jr..⁶⁵

7. JANE MILLER

Jane was born 2 July 1759 probably in Cecil co., MD. She married John Boyer. As a member of the family, John Boyer signed on 1 Feb. 1787 a statement certifying "that William Miller paid 8 pounds to Josiah Scott that was due him from the estate of Oliver Miller junr Deceased."⁶⁶

8. OLIVER MILLER, JR.

Oliver, Jr., was born 17 Mar. 1761. Apparently he never married. He inherited his father's still in 1782. He died intestate in 1783. On 30 May 1785 his brother William was made "Administrator of all and singular the Goods, chattles and Credits of Oliver Miller deceased." Expenses in connection with Oliver's estate included 15 shillings for his coffin and 1/15/- pounds for "Whiske for Burial five Gallons." The estate was settled 6 Feb. 1787 with a balance of 27/7/11 pounds.⁶⁷

9. JAMES MILLER

James was born 29 Mar. 1763 probably in Conococheague Settlement, Frederick (now Washington) Co., MD. He married 6 Dec. 1787 Mary Smith, daughter of John & Jane Smith of Cross Creek. James inherited his father's homestead for which he obtained on 26 Sept. 1785 a warrant and on 5 Jan. 1786 a survey for 424 acres and 39 perches on Peters Creek. Upon the payment of 7/15/3 pounds he patented the land *Mansfield* on 23 Mar. 1797.⁶⁸ In 1808 James added a stone section to the original two-story log house which had a roof of split shingles. And in 1830 James and his son Oliver replaced the remaining log part of the house with a building of stone, resulting in the all stone house as it stands today. Like his father, James ran a store and kept a ledger book. (1814 – 1834).⁶⁹ On 28 Nov. 1834 James & Mary deeded the homestead to their son, Oliver, they continuing to live there.⁷⁰ At the same time they deeded 100 acres & 16 perches of adjoining land to their son Joseph.⁷¹ Mary died 10 Mar. 1839 and James died 4 Mar. 1844. They were both buried in the Bethel Park Presbyterian Cemetery. The children of James & Mary were Jane, Sarah, Oliver, John, James, Joseph, Alexander, and Thomas.

10. MARY MILLER

Mary was born 28 Mar. 1765 probably in Conococheague Settlement, Frederick (now Washington) Co., MD. She married 12 July 1787 William Wallace, born about 1758 in Chanceford Twp., York co., PA, son of Moses Wallace. At her wedding in the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church she received the Tidball Jar. On 28 Jan. 1791 William bought for 6/17/0-3/4 pounds from Robert & Sarah Lyle 8 acres & 32 perches of a tract called Richland on Raccoon Creek adjoining lands of Robert and John Lyle and William's father, Moses.⁷² Also in 1791 William inherited from his father 125 acres & 71 perches of *Cobham* in Smith Twp., Washington Co.⁷³ On 14 Nov. 1804 pew #37 at the Cross Creek Presbyterian Church was rented for \$5.50 to William, Moses, and Oliver Wallace.⁷⁴ In the 1810 census for Mt. Pleasant Twp., Washington Co., William was listed as the head of a family consisting of one male less than 10 (i.e. son Thomas), 1 male 10-16 (i.e. son William), 4 males 16-26 (i.e. Moses, Oliver, Joseph, John), 1 male 45 & over (i.e. William), 3 females less than 10 (i.e. Mary, Nancy, Rebecca) and 1 female 45 and over (i.e. Mary).⁷⁵ In 1835 William & Mary, their daughter Rebecca and her husband Robert Barton removed to Cumberland, Guernsey Co., OH. For \$2,880 William had bought 1 1/2 quarters of a section on the outskirts of the village.⁷⁶ On 16 Oct. 1839 William & Mary sold to their son William and their son-in-law Robert Barton for \$2,000 46 acres, 3 roods, & 5 perches of this land which by then had been laid out as the Barton & Wallace Addition to the village of

Cumberland.⁷⁷ William died 18 July 1842 and Mary 7 Apr. 1848. They were both buried in the Cumberland Cemetery. William had served in the Revolutionary War.⁷⁸ Their children were Moses, Oliver Miller, Joseph Smith, John Clark, William (died in infancy), Rev. William, Mary Johnston, Henry, Rebecca Barton, and Thomas. Being the youngest daughter of William & Mary (Miller) Wallace, Rebecca received at her wedding the Tidball Jar. The jar has now descended to Mrs. Anne Stenerson of San Carlos, CA.

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