

# Kelly Miller

## Honored with Marker

As part of February's observance as Black History Month, the Fairfield County Historical Society will dedicate its newest historical marker to the memory of Kelly Miller on Sunday, February 2, at 3 p.m.

Miller, regarded as the greatest black educator ever to come out of Fairfield County, was the son of a slave, who rose to become a noted author, lecturer, mathematician and college dean. Kelly Miller Elementary School is named in his honor.

The unveiling of the marker and the dedication service will be held on South Congress Street in front of Winn Auto Parts. Remarks will be made by Dr. Marshall Grigsby, president of Benedict College, and music will be provided by the Winstboro High School Chorus, directed by Mrs. Janice Jordan.

Kelly Miller was born in 1863, the son of freed slaves, on the plantation of Mrs. Nancy K. Rabb, approximately five miles west of Winstboro on Mill Creek. One of thirteen children, Miller first attended New

Hope school, and then came under the tutelage of Willard Richardson, a New Englander who organized the Fairfield Institute on the site of what is now Russell-McCutchen Funeral Home. The marker will also highlight the history of this school, which burned in the early 1930s.

Young Miller went on to school in Charlotte, then to Washington, D.C., where he enrolled at Howard Preparatory School and later was graduated with honors from Howard University in 1886. He attended graduate school at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and later became dean at Howard, where he taught for many years. The friend of two presidents - Wilson and Harding - Dr. Miller died in 1939, and is buried in Washington.

The two-sided marker, approved by the South Carolina State Archives, is inscribed "Kelly Miller (1863-1939)" on one side, and "Fairfield Institute" on the other side. The public is invited to participate in the dedication ceremony.

1/18/96



the old academy near Jenkinsville on the evening of January 1, the purpose and object being to obtain funds to help out the home missions of the Little River Baptist Church. The clouds were lowering and the rain began to fall, but notwithstanding all this the people came out and showed by their presence their deep interest in the cause for which it was given, and that snug little building was soon seated to its full capacity.

The News and Herald, Winnsboro, S.C., January 11, 1940.

(Editor's note: Last week The News and Herald published a brief account of the death of Dr. Kelly Miller, asking its subscribers to supply additional information, if possible. Facts for the following story were obtained from a number of sources, among those being Mrs. F.M. Gadsden, Robert Miller, brother of the deceased, and H.E. Ketchin; two newspapers, The Washington Evening Star, which carried a picture, news article and editorial on Kelly Miller, and the Washington Afro-American (Negro journal), which puts him in its all-time Hall of Fame, with Booker T. Washington and others, also supplied valuable information.

Kelly Miller, author, lecturer, mathematician, former dean of the college of arts and sciences and retired professor of sociology at Howard University, was born in 1863 five miles west of Winnsboro on Mill Creek, on the plantation owned by Mrs. Nancy K. Rabb. He was the son of Kelly Miller, a freed slave, and Elizabeth Miller, once a slave owned by the Chappell family of Jenkinsville. There were thirteen

in his family and only two remain now, Robert Miller, a former teacher, and John Miller, both of Winnsboro. (Robert attended the final rites last week at the Howard Chapel, Washington, D.C.)

Coming of school age only a short time after the Civil War, Kelly first attended the New Hope School for Negroes which evidently had just been organized. It is said that teachers for this school came from Biddle university, Charlotte, N.C. This school is now known as the Johnson C. Smith University, and it is interesting to note that another native of Fairfield, H.L. McCrorey, is its president.

It was early noticed that Kelly was a precocious child. He raced through the simple courses at New Hope and subsequently went to the Joe Thomson school, another newly organized institute for Negroes, but here, too, he soon knew as much as did his teachers.

In the early 1870's there arrived in Winnsboro a Mr. Willard Richardson from the New England states (Massachusetts or Connecticut). He came as a sort of missionary-teacher for the Negroes and organized a school for them in a long hall-like residence which stood opposite what is now the oil mill. (The building was destroyed only a few years ago.) Here it was that Kelly continued his meagre education. Mr. Richardson, a highly educated man himself, who taught his charges the capitals of the states by putting them to music, noticed Kelly's brightness, particularly his proclivity for mathematics.

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where he entered Howard preparatory school, then the university itself, from which he was graduated with an A.B. degree in 1886. He then worked in the government pension office in Washington for a number of years, attended Johns Hopkins graduate school for two years, coming back to Howard to receive his master's degree in 1901. While studying for his masters he began teaching at Howard and he helped revamp the school's curriculum. He also taught one year in Washington's newly organized public school.

He accepted the professorship of science and sociology at Howard and after a number of years was made Dean of the college. It is said he could have been president if he so desired. He watched and helped Howard grow from a small college, with a few small buildings, into a large university, and he was largely responsible for its Freedman's hospital.

Dr. Miller was the author of many books and pamphlets, the best known of which were "Race Adjustments", published in 1908, and "Out of the House of Bondage", 1914. He addressed open letters to both President Woodrow Wilson and President Warren G. Harding. He was considered Howard's most distinguished alumnus.

Dr. Miller retired in 1932, but he continued his work. He wrote a column for 100 weekly newspapers for which service he made no charge.

Besides his widow, he is survived by two sons, one a dentist in New York City, the other a newspaperman of Washington, D.C.; two daughters, both teachers; and two brothers, both of Winnsboro, S.C.

# KELLY MILLER:— HIS LIFE & WORK

One Drink And One Smoke Was  
Sufficient To Last Negro Ed-  
ucator 76 Years.

(By C. H. Wetmore in The  
Washington Post). <sup>1940</sup>

The Nation, as well as Wash-  
ington, lost a noble man when  
Kelly Miller passed on as the old  
year neared its end.

I knew him well and am proud  
to say that during 1935-36, when  
his eyesight was failing, he called  
upon me to assist in writing his  
autobiography, which I did on two  
or three days a week, by asking  
questions and placing his answers  
on paper.

This work was nearly completed  
when a cataract made him nearly  
blind and he was compelled to un-  
dergo three operations. When he  
recovered, his sight was dim and  
he was not able to complete the  
story of what he named "My Span  
of Time."

Kelly Miller escaped being born  
a slave by six months. At the age  
of 6 years, clad only in a tow  
shirt, he was sent to a one-room  
school by parents who could nei-  
ther read nor write, but were cu-  
rious to know what it was. With-  
in a week their curiosity was sat-  
isfied in a measure when Kelly  
brought home a copy of McGuffey's  
First Reader, and proudly  
showing them a picture he spelled  
the word C-A-T.

One year later he had his first  
smoke. He filled an old pipe of  
his father's and kept puffing un-  
til the bowl was empty. Then the  
world turned upside down while  
he rolled in anguish between rows  
of cornstalks. That smoke lasted  
him all his life.

And the one drink of ardent  
spirits which he took while a  
freshman at Howard University  
also was his only draught of li-  
quor. He never possessed a watch,  
nor a fountain pen and never own-  
ed an automobile. The radio he  
accepted as an educational asset  
and he considered a piano for his  
daughters in the same light.

Headquarters for the Miller  
family was a two-room shack on  
a South Carolina farm owned by  
a former Confederate soldier and  
worked by Kelly Miller, Sr., as  
a sharecropper. Two girls slept  
in one of the rooms with mother  
and father; seven boys slept in a  
corn crib which was delightfully  
cool in the summer and warm in  
winter when filled with cotton.

Mornings, the boys, clad in tow  
shirts, would scamper over to the  
shack, pulling tufts of cotton from  
their hair as they went, then sit  
upon boxes drawn up to a table  
where fried bacon, cornpone and  
lasses awaited them.

Early in life young Miller prov-  
ed himself a prodigy in mathe-  
matics. Later, during his student  
life at Howard he was given pri-  
vate instruction in astronomy at  
the U. S. Naval Observatory, and  
when he was graduated from col-  
lege he took a postgraduate course  
in higher mathematics at Johns  
Hopkins University.

A New England missionary soci-  
ety paved the way for Miller to  
enter Howard, by paying his ex-  
penses to Washington and giving  
him a \$10 bill. Thus, on his own,  
he was compelled to work his way  
as many other young men have  
done.

It was the missionaries' plan  
that he should study for the min-  
istry, but during the preparatory  
course, which Miller cut down  
from three years to two, he made  
visits to the Library of Congress,  
where he read Darwin and Hux-  
ley and arrived at the conclusion  
that he would not be good mat-  
erial for the pulpit; and so he ma-  
triculated in the academic course.

Lack of money worried him  
greatly, not because of personal  
comforts which he must forego,  
but he feared that death might  
claim someone back home and he  
would be unable to attend the  
funeral.

One day—it was during Grover  
Cleveland's first administration—  
he saw a placard in a window  
that caused him to take an exam-  
ination under the new civil ser-  
vice law. When summer came he  
got a job as waiter in a Massa-  
chusetts seaside resort. He was  
standing with a tray filled with  
dishes when some one said: "Kel-  
ly, here's a telegram for you."

Miller, trembling with anxiety  
concerning the old folks, said:  
"Open it and read it to me. My  
hands are full."

A second later the tray fell on  
the floor and Kelly Miller, hatless,  
bolted through the kitchen, out the  
rear exit and ran to the water-  
front where a steamer was due to  
leave for New York. He worked  
his passage, happier than ever be-  
fore in his life, for he carried in  
his pocket the notice that he had  
been appointed a clerk in the Pen-  
sion Office, salary \$600 a year.  
Arriving in Washington as helper  
to a truck driver, he told the dean  
of men of his good fortune and  
an arrangement was made by  
which he could continue his col-  
lege course by attending night  
courses after serving the Govern-  
ment in daytime.

After his postgraduate course  
at Johns Hopkins, Miller return-  
ed to Washington and became in-  
structor of mathematics in the  
public schools. A year later his  
alma mater called him to become  
a member of the faculty. First,  
professor of mathematics, then  
professor and subsequently dean  
of sociology, he was retired for  
age as dean emeritus of Howard  
University.

Notwithstanding his many ac-  
tivities as instructor and writer,  
Miller found time to deliver lec-  
tures to both white and colored  
audiences from coast to coast. His  
last public appearance was in  
1937, when he stood on a platform  
once occupied by Theodore Roose-  
velt and delivered the Founders'  
Day address at Tuskegee Insti-  
tute.

By the written word and by  
speech Miller played a prominent  
part during political campaigns,  
and doubtless influenced many  
voters. When Landon was nomi-

nated he said, "We need more  
than an expert accountant for  
President." He was an admirer  
of Eleanor Roosevelt and express-  
ed the opinion that, by her own  
works, rather than her association,  
she had won the right to the title,  
First Lady of the Land.

The crowning achievement to  
Kelly Miller's well-spent life  
came during the last two years  
when the board of trustees of  
Howard University approved his  
plan for an anthropological ex-  
hibit and archives, dedicated to  
the Negroes of the world, and set  
aside a wing of the new library  
building for that purpose.

The dean, his eyesight blurred,  
but his brain active as ever, was  
working out details for his plan  
when the clock sounded finis to  
his span of time.



## FAIRFIELD NATIVE

This is the late Dr. Kelly Miller, who was born in  
Fairfield County, educated at Howard University,  
and later taught there. Two schools, one here in  
Fairfield and one in Washington, D.C., are named  
for the well-known black educator. Miller's mother  
was a slave and his father a tenant farmer. He  
was the author of several books and a number of  
amphlets.

# Son of Fairfield County Slave Achieves National Distinction

11/1/1940  
KELLY MILLER, WHO DIED IN WASHINGTON DECEMBER 29, RECEIVED HIS EARLY EDUCATION IN WINNSBORO. HE WORKED TIRELESSLY FOR ADVANCEMENT OF HIS RACE

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thesis, it is interesting to note that Mr. Richardson, during his vacation, generously taught many of the white boys of the community without charge. Despite the fact that he taught the newly freed Negroes, he was quite a favorite, it is said. Miss Julia Fripp, a lady who came here from Charleston, taught either in Mr. Richardson's school or in another for Negroes. After a number of years, Mr. Richardson was replaced by a Negro instructor and the school soon went on the rocks. Mr. Elliott Ketchin says that as Mr. Richardson was boarding the train to go North again, he was asked what success he had had in his work here. "Not much," he said in effect. "If I had gone to any other land as a missionary, I believe I would have been far more famous").

Be that as it may, Kelly Miller, after leaving the Richardson school, managed to go to Washington where he entered Howard preparatory school, then the university itself, from which he was graduated with an A. B. degree in 1886. He then worked in the government pension office in Washington for a number of years, attended Johns Hopkins graduate school for two years, coming back to Howard to receive his Master's degree in 1901. While studying for his Masters he began teaching at Howard and he helped revamp the school's curriculum. He also taught one year in Washington's newly organized public school.

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## Shiloh Was Home Church of Kelly Miller, Educator

The Shiloh First United Presbyterian Church was founded in 1880 by Joe Thompson. Mr. Thompson deeded three acres of land for the church site.

This church was relocated in 1945 under the auspices of Dr. Charles W. Talley's pastorate, who is now the Executive of the South Carolina-Georgia Synod of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Seven Presbyterian ministers have gone out from this church and two medical doctors.

This is also the home church of the noted Kelly Miller.

Church school superintendents to serve long periods of time are: Benjamin Glenn, Joe Thompson, Joe Russell, James Glenn and the present superintendent, Ernest W. Glenn, Sr.

Ministers to serve long periods of time are: Revs. J. A. Tillman (14 years), G. M. Ulmer (14 years), R. G. Toatley (11 years) and the present minister, Rev. James H. Hudson (13 years).

The membership of the church is 103.

Present Officers: Elders: Lilla R. Gaston (granddaughter of the founder), J. G. Gaston, Eunice J. Glenn, Lucy Davis, Belle Davis, James F. Davis, Ernest W. Glenn, Sr., Edward Glenn, Richard Brown and B. L. Glenn.

Deacons: John R. Gaston, Ralph Clayborne, Lonnie Murphy, Ella Davis, Essie R. Talley, J. G. Gaston and Albert Toatley.

Trustees: Lonnie Murphy, John R. Gaston, Casper L. Glenn, James F. Davis, Richard Brown, Mrs. Martha M. Glenn and Cartez Davis.