

## *African American History Month*

### *Special Recognition for Kelly Miller's Example to Fairfield County Citizens*

#### Kelly Miller: Author, Lecturer, Mathematician



Kelly Miller was born in a two-room shack on the plantation of Nancy Kincaid Rabb on July 18, 1863, just five miles west of Winnsboro on Mill Creek. He was the 6<sup>th</sup> child of Kelly Miller, a free man and tenant farmer who served in the Civil War as a servant to Captain John Bell of Company F, 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment, SC Infantry under Captain Hayne McMeekin, and his mother was Elizabeth Roberts, once a slave of the Chappell family of Jenkinsville. His grandfather was Isaac Miller, also a free man. Kelly Jr. died December 29, 1939 in Washington, D. C. and is buried in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery.

The Washington Post newspaper once wrote of him stating, "The Nation, as well as Washington, lost a noble man when Kelly Miller passed on as the old year neared its end."

Kelly first attended the New Hope School and then went to the Joe Thomson School here in Fairfield County. Then in the 1870's, Mr. Willard Richardson, from New England, opened a school for Negro children in Winnsboro known as the Fairfield Institute. Kelly was taught by Mr. Richardson (1878-1880), received a B.S. from Howard University in 1886, he studied advanced mathematics (1886-1887) with Captain Edgar Frisby, an English mathematician at the U. S. Naval Observatory, postgraduate of Johns Hopkins University (1887-1889). He was the first African American to attend Johns Hopkins University, but left the college in 1889 when the tuition was raised from \$100 to \$200, after he left Johns Hopkins, the college closed its doors to black students. He then taught mathematics at the M Street High School in Washington, D.C. (1889-1890) and then became a professor of mathematics at Howard University 1890-1895 and a professor of Sociology at Howard University (1895-1934), was Dean of the college of Arts and Sciences at Howard University (1907-1918), received a M.A. in mathematics in 1901 at Howard University and received a law degree (L.L.D.) in 1903.

Kelly has also been the author of several books: Race Adjustments 1908, Out of the House of Bondage 1914, An Appeal to Conscience 1918, and The Everlasting Stain 1924.

In 1886, he came back to his home town and purchased the land on which he was born. He purchased one hundred acres of land known as the "Kelly Miller Place" for \$800 from Nancy K. Rabb. But then in 1937 he sold 25 acres of this land to John Bird for \$200 and in 1939 sold the remainder of the property, 75 acres to Charles Andy Young for \$500.

On July 17, 1894, he married Annie May Butler of Baltimore, Maryland and had five children to this union — Newton, deceased before 1940, Paul, Irene, May and Kelly Jr. One of the sons became a dentist in New York City and the other son a newspaper man in Washington, D. C.; both daughters became teachers.

Kelly worked his way through college by working as a clerk for the U. S. Pension Office in Washington, D.C.

His accomplishments were written in the "Journal of Negro History" pages 182-197. (July, 1960). Quotes from his obituary published in the "Journal of Negro History", pages 137-138 (July, 1940): "He represented in a great measure that generation of enterprising Negroes who were inspired by the missionary teachers from the North to prepare for service among their lowly people and finally found their way partly blocked by these very white friends who would not readily yield to the ambitious Negroes the leadership in their own

education." "He was drawn from his chosen field to battle for the rights of his race during the years of reaction when it seemed that all that the race had won immediately after emancipation would be swept away. He ceased to teach mathematics and took up sociology." "He lectured more extensively than any Negro who has ever lived, and he thus demonstrated the capacity of the Negro to profit by higher education at the time when others sought to restrict the race to the study of the fundamentals and practical pursuits." "He was a scholarly man in the sense of having mastered what he had studied and in being conversant with the best thought of his day, but he was not a scholar from the point of view of the specialist, for Miller produced no great theory or principle in the fields in which he worked. Time will determine his stature." These quotes were written by Carter G. Woodson.

He convinced Howard University that they should use their prestige and location in Washington to become a national center for black studies. Miller had planned a "Negro-Americana Museum and Library" and in 1914 he persuaded Jesse E. Moorland to donate to Howard his large private library on blacks in Africa and in the United States as the foundation for the proposed Library. It became known as the Moorland Foundation and in 1973 was reorganized as the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, a research library, archives and museum.

In a time when there was no television, radios nor air travel, this man traveled up and down the east coast from the Mid Atlantic to the South lecturing on civil rights and equality. This is a time when there was no equality for the Negroes but yet he believed that through education and higher learning, you can accomplish anything. And to believe that this man got his humble beginnings with a McGuffey's First Reader in a little country school named "New Hope", what a fitting name. It is interesting to note that the teachers at New Hope came from Biddle University, Charlotte, N.C. This school is now known as the Johnson C. Smith University, and that another native of Fairfield County, H. L. McCrory, was its president at one time.

*Kelly believed anything can be accomplished when you put your mind and hard work to it and this is just one of Fairfield Counties, great examples.*