



SPOTLIGHT ON HISTORY

(The following article appeared in the September 14, 1901 Newark Evening News.)

“MADISON IS PROUD OF THIS OLD HOUSE

Miller Homestead Has Grandly Withstood the Storms of One Hundred and Sixty-one Years.

ONCE IT SHELTERED WASHINGTON

He visited the Place With Lafayette and Old Residents Repeat the Story of How He Drew Water From the Well, Drinking from the Oaken Bucket Without Spilling a Drop.

The oldest house in Madison, and one which is preserved intact because of its historical associations, is situated opposite the John B. Miller homestead, and adjoining the property of F.W. Stemmler, on the road leading from Madison to Hanover, and about a quarter of a mile from the former place. The house is a one and -a-half-story frame with a basement kitchen running the full length of the building, facing the south. The basement wall, made of stone, is in as good condition to-day as when built. The weatherboards have a reddish tint, which is the only real evidence of more than a century and a half of exposure to the weather. The rooms are large and airy, and before the erection of many surrounding buildings, afforded a fine view on all sides.

The house was erected in 1740 by Alexander Miller, who with his son Josiah came from Southampton, Long Island, and settled here. They were accompanied by James and David Burnet, who were the earliest white settlers of Bottle Hill, now Madison. The house was known then as Miller's Station, and was subsequently made historic ground by Washington and Lafayette, who were entertained there while stationed in Morristown. The property passed through five generations of the Miller family. Luke Miller was the son of Joshua, John B., the son of Luke, and David L. the son of John B., who was well known to the present generation.

Washington's Great Achievements

The “Old Boys of Bottle Hill”, at a recent anniversary, spoke of the visit Washington made to the place while in encampment at Loantaka. Their fathers, who were residents here during revolutionary times, said that Washington went to the well, which was of the old sweep pattern, insisting upon performing the task of drawing water, although urged not to do so for fear of

soiling his uniform. He drank from the old oaken bucket and when his thirst was quenched boasted of how he had done it without even a drop of water falling upon his clothing.

In the front room on the northeast of the building, Washington wrote several letters while in another wing of the building he discussed the war situation with his brother officers.

Charles C. Force, the vice-president of the "Old Boys of Bottle Hill", brings out some interesting history connected with this property. He learned the blacksmith trade with John B. Miller, who had a forge in an old building adjoining the homestead property. Mr. Force served Mr. Miller from 1834 to 1840. In those days an apprentice was obliged to fill in ten hours a day and in case of a rush to do overwork without even a thought of extra compensation. If he desired even an hour off it was to be made up the same day. Mr. Force desired a part of a day off in the summer of 1834 to see the first train run through Madison. It was the greatest day he ever knew and the entire population of Madison, numbering about forty, assembled at the depot, and the puff of the locomotive and sound of the escaping steam as it approached the station is still as fresh in his memory as it was sixty-seven years ago. He rode to Morristown and was obliged to get off twice, once to drive a cow off the track and another time to help fasten down a rail which had become loosened from the heat. For those few hours of pleasure he was obliged to work until midnight to make up lost time."

The Miller Homestead is still standing on Ridgedale Avenue in Madison. It is now referred to as The Luke Miller House. The F.W. Stemmler property is now part of Summerhill Park and the house no longer exists.



Early photo of the Luke Miller house at
105 Ridgedale Avenue in Madison.