

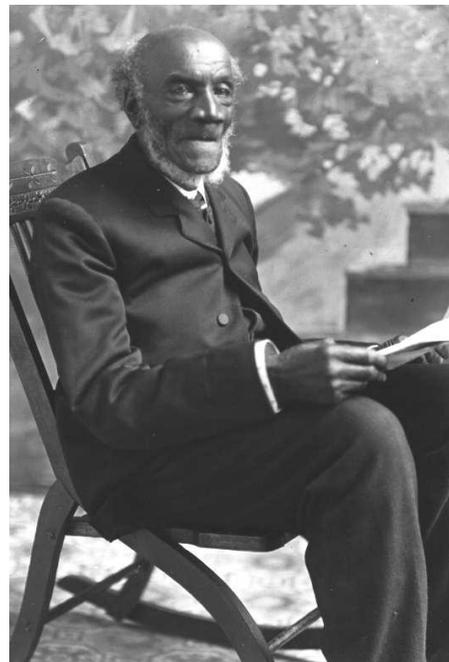
My Journey: Finding My Grey County Roots

Nancy M. Lee

When I began my quest to find my family's history many years ago, I had no idea that I was directly descended from two old farmers from Grey County, Ontario. In the summer of 2007 I discovered a small notebook in my late cousin's effects that had originally belonged to my paternal great grandfather, James Albert Leraime Miller, which shed the first glimmer of light on where branches of my family may have settled during the mid-1800s. The notebook had the names plus dates of birth of the children and grandchildren of my paternal great grandparents. James Miller was the father of my father's mother, Adelene Bertha Miller. In James' own handwriting, he wrote that he was born in Owen Sound on Feb 18, 1866. Up until then I knew next to nothing about James, and I spent the rest of that year trying in vain to find out more about him and his connection to Owen Sound.

The following summer, in August 2008, my husband and I ventured up to the Owen Sound Emancipation Celebration Picnic for the very first time. I had a picture of my great grandfather, James A.L. Miller, and the knowledge which I had gained from the little notebook, as well as the 1871 Canadian Census,¹ that he was the son of Margaret and Henry Miller. I went to the registration desk and asked if anyone knew anything about the Miller family. I was then introduced to a gentleman who was descended from Thomas Henry Miller, the co-founder of this Emancipation Celebration. There I showed him the picture of my James and recounted the basic information that I had. He didn't recognize the face in the photograph that I held, but he assured me that if my James Miller was an African-Canadian born in Owen Sound in the mid to late 1800s then he must be part of the family of the well-known "Father" Thomas Henry Miller.

This descendant of "Father" Miller educated me regarding the historical fact that there was only one Black Miller family living in Owen Sound during that era and then said, "Girl, you have some history!" I left Owen Sound that day feeling elated and somewhat



Rev. Thomas Henry Miller, British Methodist Episcopal Church, Owen Sound, Grey Roots Archival Collection 976.20.20

¹ 1871 Census of Canada, Grey North, Owen Sound, Page 35, Lines 1-5

overwhelmed, and admittedly still a little confused, but I knew that I was on the right path. For the next six months, I struggled, trying unsuccessfully to find the missing link that I needed to prove my Owen Sound Miller family heritage.

It was early the following year that I first heard about an old farmer named Henry Miller and his wife Priscilla. A local historian by the name of Ralph Clark contacted me through the family genealogy website Ancestry.ca. He was doing research on the local history regarding the Rocky Saugeen/Negro Creek area and came across my family tree. He was hoping that I had some family history information to share with him. It turned out however, that he was the one who had the information that I had thus far been unable to uncover. Ralph had initially contacted me concerning James' mother, Margaret Miller, whose father, Francis Deadman, had been granted a small 50 acre parcel of Crown land in Bentinck Township, Grey County on the west side of the Garafraxa Road.² At that time I didn't even know Margaret's maiden name. The Deadman branch on my family tree was now added.

I then revisited the 1871 Canadian Census. I realized that James was not only living with his parents, Henry and Margaret Miller and siblings (Adelia, Mary Ann and Eliza), but also his maternal grandfather Francis Deadman.³ What I eventually uncovered was a situation where the same person was listed twice in the same census. Francis Deadman was also listed as residing on his farm along with his brother Moses in Bentinck Township.⁴ I discovered that both Francis and Moses were runaway slaves from Virginia and had made their way to Grey County via Toronto. While in Toronto, they both married young immigrant English girls⁵ and by the 1851 Census they had settled side by side on 50 acre lots of land in Bentinck Township.⁶ They were just a few miles down the west side of the Garafraxa Road (now known as Hwy 6), from where Henry and Priscilla Miller resided. I can only surmise that Moses feared that if Francis wasn't also listed as living on the land that perhaps it may be taken away from them.

Upon further investigation we found Francis' Aug 23, 1873 death announcement in the *Ingersoll Chronicle*. It was determined (presumably after her husband Henry Miller had died), Margaret Miller and her children had left Owen Sound and had settled in Ingersoll, Ontario. There she remarried, to a barber named Malachi Bird in 1877.⁷ The Bird/Miller family then moved to London, Ontario, where Malachi died in 1879.⁸ According to the 1881 Canadian Census James and Mary Ann Miller were still living with their mother Margaret Bird in London, Ontario.⁹ There were three boarders also residing with them; Ada and David Green and Susan Cox. *(To date, I have not been able to uncover the whereabouts of the other two children, Adelia and*

² Bentinck Township Land Registry Instrument of Patent of Crown Land

³ 1871 Census of Canada, Town of Owen Sound, Page 34, Line 20

⁴ 1871 Census of Canada, Grey County, Bentinck Township, Page 72, Line 5

⁵ Vol. 10, Home District Marriage Registers 1831-1840 (Microfilmed for Ontario, Canada Marriages, 1801-1928)

⁶ 1851 Agricultural Census Grey County, Canada West (Ontario), Bentinck Township Page 3, Lines 25 & 26

⁷ Ontario, Canada Marriages, Oxford County, Ingersoll, Page 533

⁸ Ontario, Canada Deaths, 1869-1938, Middlesex County, City of London, Page 573

⁹ 1881 Census of Canada, London District, Page 4, Lines 19 - 24

Eliza.) According to the *City Directory* of 1881, Margaret and her son James had a barber shop and hair factory, which they possessed until they left for Toronto in 1894.¹⁰

Ralph had also informed me, when we spoke for that first time, that he believed Margaret's husband Henry Miller's parents were Henry and Priscilla Miller of Sullivan Township. Here was another exciting revelation that I had not been able to make a connection to before this point. This knowledgeable gentleman advised me during our informative conversation, that I needed to stay focused on the history rather than just the search for people. He told me that if I researched the history of a specific area and timeline, that I would indeed find my ancestors, if they had been there. He was absolutely right. Since then I have taken care and time to research the era of a particular location that I am interested in and each and every time, I have been able to uncover new or additional information on an ancestor. When you find one ancestor there are usually more to follow, and before you know it, you have discovered an extended, or perhaps another, branch of your family tree.

That I was possibly related to a man named Henry Miller who settled 50 acres in Sullivan Township, in an area which eventually became known as Negro Creek in the mid-1800s, was fantastic news to my ears. I needed to learn as much as I possibly could about this lost ancestor of mine. So began my search for a runaway slave named Henry Miller. Henry Miller is listed in the 1851 Agricultural Census as residing on Concession 1, Division 1, Lot 22, in Sullivan Township.¹¹ In the 1851 Canadian Census, the whole family is listed.¹² Along with Henry and his wife Priscilla, there are two boys also listed as residing with them; Henry (who we began to call Henry Jr.), aged 15, and William, aged 7. Henry (who we now referred to as Henry Sr. for sorting purposes), was 60 years old and even though Priscilla's age was noted as 63 in 1852, I thought it was simply an error for at that advanced age she would have been past childbearing years to have had children aged 15 and 7. I then looked up the 1861 Canadian Census where William was still with them and now aged 16, but instead of Henry Jr., there was now a young man aged 18 named Thomas Miller in his place.¹³

Young Thomas, it was later discovered, was also listed in the 1861 census as Thomas H. Miller and living with his father (the renowned "Father" Thomas Henry Miller), siblings and his father's wife Sarah in the town of Owen Sound.¹⁴ The only explanation that we can deduce is that his father listed him as living with him and the family when the census taker arrived. (*To date each Canadian household is supposed to include all family members living within that specific household even if they are away at the time of the census taking*). When the census taker arrived at the Miller's Sullivan Township farm, obviously young Thomas "Henry" was physically there and was listed again. However, it was duly noted in that same 1861 census taken at the Miller farm in Sullivan Township that Thomas Henry Jr.'s permanent residence was in Owen

¹⁰ 1881 *City Directory of London, Ontario*, Page 52

¹¹ 1851 Agricultural Census Grey County, Canada West (Ontario), Sullivan Township, Page 23, Line 37

¹² 1851 Census of Canada, Grey County, Sullivan Township, Page 5/6, Lines 47 - 50

¹³ 1861 Canada West Census, Grey County, Sullivan Township, Page 17, Lines 26-33

¹⁴ 1861 Census of Canada, Grey County, Owen Sound, Page 37, Lines 28-36

Sound. At that stage we suspected that young Thomas “Henry” normally went by his middle name of “Henry” to avoid confusion with his father, the older Thomas Henry Miller: co-founder and lay-preacher of the Owen Sound British Methodist Episcopal Church.

I believe that the Thomas H. Miller who was listed twice in that 1861 Census of Canada is the same “Henry” Miller who was listed in the 1851 census living with his grandparents Henry and Priscilla in Sullivan Township, and in the 1871 Census of Canada residing with his wife Margaret and family in Owen Sound. I must admit that I am not sure why this young Thomas “Henry” was living with his grandfather in Sullivan Township in 1851, while his father Thomas was just up the road on the east side of the Garafraxa Road in Holland Township trying to make a go of it as a farmer on the 2nd Concession, Lot 22 beside his sister (Henry & Priscilla’s youngest daughter), Rachel, and her husband Scott White, on Lot 21.¹⁵ But I have learned through my many years of genealogy research that some questions will never be answered.

It is understood that when researching one’s ancestors you cannot always depend on dates of birth or name spellings that are noted within a specific historical census or documented record. From one census year to the next the same person can be listed with different name spellings and altered ages. In the case of the aforementioned 1861 Canadian Census, I originally assumed that Henry Jr. had left home and another relative by the name of Thomas was now living with the family. Along with Thomas and William there were three more Miller children now residing with Henry Sr. and Priscilla. Grandchildren, I presumed, but from whom? A woman by the name of “Catrin Cuckee” was also residing there on the farm. Who could this be? Where did she come from? As I followed the row on which Henry Sr.’s name was listed I discovered that the family lived in a one storey log house and that it served as seven out of the eight people’s permanent residence (as previously stated, the young Thomas Miller’s residence was listed as Owen Sound).

I had quite a few questions after discovering the Millers of Sullivan Township in 1861. Firstly I wanted to know who this “Cuckee” woman was, and secondly, where did all of these children come from? Did they belong to this “Cuckee” woman? If so, why didn’t they have her last name? I went back a second time to have a closer look at the 1851 Canadian Census.¹⁶ Again tracing along the row where Henry Sr.’s name was listed, I realized that two families had resided in that one storey log house! Henry Sr., Priscilla, Henry Jr. and William were listed on the very bottom of page five/six. (*The questions in this particular census took up four sheets which counted as two pages.*) I have come to find that most historical census pages are not in perfect numerical order due to the fact that pages were printed and numbered in advance, and if more pages were needed, the census taker would simply add them in as required. The actual number of the page directly after the Henry Miller listings on page five and six is 74. The seven was pre-printed and the number four (4) was hand written. (It is safe to assume that this page “74” was mistakenly put directly behind page six). It wasn’t until page 17 on the microfilm that I was able to find the exact next page that showed a second family also residing with the Millers

¹⁵ 1851 Census of Canada, Grey County, Holland Township, Page 49, Lines 23-24

¹⁶ 1851 Census of Canada, Grey County, Sullivan Township, Page 17, Lines 1-3

in their one storey log house. (*The number 17 was pre-printed on the census page; however, the number nine (9), was hand written on the top right corner of the page.*) The family was named “Chalkee.” A male listed under the name of Ira or Jno, his wife Catherine, and a son named John. To me that clarified “Catrin Cuckee” from the 1861 census! What a huge breakthrough to have made a connection like that. Was she Henry’s daughter? Or was this family there because the husband was a hired hand on the farm? But unearthing this connection still didn’t explain who all those other Miller children belonged to.

It took the next two plus years of obsessive and at times irrational compulsiveness to uncover the basic story about a man who was born into slavery in the state of Maryland and eventually found his freedom and a life without chains along with his family in the wilds of northern Canada West now known as Ontario. Without the enthusiastic assistance of my sister Sandy, who shares my neurotic interest in finding out whom we are descended from, the account of this determined, hard-working, ex-slave who seemed to have been forgotten in history could not have been told. On the internet Sandy found information on pages seven and eight in *The History of Sullivan Township*. This book explained that Crown Grant lots of 50 acres were surveyed and laid out on both sides of the Garafraxa Road in 1841. Henry Miller’s name is listed as one of the earliest settlers in Sullivan Township, having settled on Concession 1, Part 1, Lot 22 on Oct 21, 1842. This would have made Henry Miller one of the first, if not the first, Black settlers in the area. A research trip to Owen Sound for further investigation found quite a bit of information in the census records regarding “Father” Thomas Henry Miller and his growing family.

My sister Sandy then made another amazing discovery on the internet. Henry Sr. had the where-with-all to become a British Citizen. On April 15, 1843, Henry down put his “X”, signing the declaration oath, to become a naturalized citizen of the British Commonwealth. I am supposing that Henry Sr. worried about bounty hunters tracking them down and taking them back to the States and to a life of slavery. Becoming a citizen would have awarded him some added protection. My thinking was that surely the government wouldn’t allow citizens of the Commonwealth to be dragged back to the states unabated?

Slowly things began to unfold and fall into place for us. At this point though, we still hadn’t identified all of the Miller children from the 1861 Canadian Census of the Sullivan Township farm or who their parents were. With too many hours of researching on the internet to count, long, detailed phone conversations, and hundreds of emails between my sister and I over the following winter, we began to slowly unravel our family’s history. We knew about “Father” Miller and his admirable contributions to the Black society of Owen Sound and had been told that if our great grandfather was a Miller of African-Canadian descent (which he was), there had to be a connection somewhere. We became even more diligent with our research. In an effort to connect the lives of the descendants of Henry and Priscilla Miller of Sullivan Township, we began a massive spreadsheet in order to keep track of each and every “Black” Miller in Grey County, and their descendants. Included in this spreadsheet were the dates of births, census

years that each person was found, lineage connections, transfers of land, marriages and deaths, and any additional information that was uncovered during our research.

I then came across Paul White's *Owen Sound: The Port City*.¹⁷ In Mr. White's book he recounts the fact that a runaway African-born slave by the name of "Isaiah Chokee" was a cook and crew hand on the schooner "Fly" owned by W.C. Boyd. Isaiah showed up in Owen Sound according to Mr. White around 1841/42. After Boyd sold the "Fly" in 1843, Isaiah was thought to have travelled south and settled in Holland or Glenelg Township. It was amazing to have Isaiah's presence verified in Owen Sound before we found him with the Miller family of Sullivan Township in the 1851 Canadian Census. In the *1865-66 Directory of Grey County* both Thomas and "Henry" Miller are listed as living on Scrope Street in Owen Sound. We believe that this is "Father" Thomas Miller and his son Thomas "Henry" Jr. Henry Miller Sr. was also listed in the same directory residing on his farm in Sullivan Township.

After attending the 2010 Owen Sound Emancipation Celebration, my sister and I decided that we needed another research trek back up to Owen Sound, and took our two daughters for additional research assistance. At Grey Roots Museum & Archives, while looking up land transfer records pertaining to Henry Sr.'s Sullivan Township farm, we made the biggest discovery yet regarding this potential ancestor of ours. In the Land Transfer Book for the Township of Sullivan on page 121, the word "Will", jumped out at us. My sister and I locked eyes and instinctively knew that we had just stumbled upon something very significant! Once the archivist presented us with the original registrar's volume numbered 36, and with our white gloves on, we tentatively began turning the pages of this historical volume looking for instrument number 64, as directed from the land transfer book. Then suddenly there it was. The last will and testament of Henry Miller! I began to read Henry Sr.'s last will and testament out loud. It was a very poignant moment for both my sister and I. Within those yellowed pages we were able to put closure to many of our theories. Henry's last will and testament verified that Catherine Chuckee was indeed his daughter and the sister of "Father" Thomas Henry Miller. Our great grandfather James and his sister Mary were also named within the old man's will. We finally had our proof that we were in fact a part of this family and directly descended from this long forgotten man from Sullivan Township.

Henry Sr. bequeathed his 50 acre farm located on Concession 1, Div. 1, Lot 22 on the west side of the Garafraxa Road in Sullivan Township to his son, Thomas Miller of Owen Sound, for his natural life, and after his death it was to be divided as follows; *"...the East half to be equally divided between my grandchildren Julia and Joshua a son and daughter of my said son Thomas Miller and the west half to be equally divided between my grandchildren Mary, James and Rachel the latter wife of Scott White all of whom are the children of my said son Thomas Miller"*.

Note: 'Father' Thomas Henry Miller of Owen Sound had 13 children but none were named James.

Henry Sr. also owned property in the town of Owen Sound; *"...six lots being subdivisions of a Park Lot opposite the residence of John Frost, Esq. and immediately above Quinn's Tannery and*

¹⁷ *Owen Sound: The Port City*, Paul White, Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2000.

Northern Terminus: The African Canadian History Journal/Vol.10/2013

My Journey: Finding My Grey County Roots

Nancy M. Lee

situated on the west side of Poulett Street in the said Town of Owen Sound and known as Beatty's subdivisions as follows Lots numbers forty and forty one to my said granddaughter Julia. Lot forty two to my grandson Joshua. Lot number forty three to my grandson Stephen. Lot number forty four to my grandson William and lot number forty five to my daughter Catherine Chuckee the first four being the children of my said son Thomas Miller the whole of which are subdivision of Lot number three first Range West of the River in the said Town of Owen Sound."

We have proven through marriage and death records¹⁸ of the Chuckee children that their father's name was indeed Isaiah. This matched the name found in Paul White's book, *Owen Sound: The Port City*. These records also provided us with additional proof that Isaiah was the same person that we found in the 1851 census as 'Ira or Jno Chalkee living with his wife Catherine and the Henry Miller family in Sullivan Township. Isaiah and Catherine Miller - Chuckee had four children; William, John, Clarissa and Sarah Ann. Isaiah is missing in the 1861 census and since Catherine is listed as a widow after that, we will presume that Isaiah died. Catherine and her children put down roots in the town of Owen Sound, most probably after the 1869 death of her father, Henry Miller. Since Priscilla was not mentioned in Henry Sr.'s will and no record concerning her has been found after the 1861 census, she must have died sometime after late 1861, but before April, 1868. That is when Henry had his first last will and testament written for him by D.R. Dobie, A Commissioner DC.

Eventually we were able to establish through census, marriage and death records the fact that young William Miller who was first found in the 1851 and 1861 Canadian Census living with Henry and Priscilla, was actually a Chuckee. The other three children that were listed in the 1861 Canadian Census with William proved to be his siblings. It needs to be noted at this time that; neither Thomas Henry Miller's son, William Thomas Miller, nor his daughters, Mary and Rachel, were born at the time Henry Sr. had his last will and testament written, signed and witnessed on April 20, 1868. However, William Chuckee, Catherine's son who is mentioned above, was alive and well at the date of the will as was Thomas "Henry" Miller Jr.'s daughter, Mary Ann, and his son (my great grandfather), James Miller. Rachel White (wife of Scott White), was described as Henry's granddaughter, however, Rachel was actually Henry and Priscilla's daughter, which would have made her "Father" Thomas Miller's younger sister.

Understanding that Henry Sr. was an old man in his late 70s, and being illiterate, he would have had to instruct his lawyer verbally on how he wanted his assets distributed, his instructions would have then been written down and read back to him. We have to conclude that errors could have happened, and did, regarding the lineage of Henry's heirs. It must also be mentioned that there are two last will and testaments registered for Henry Miller of Sullivan Township. The first was written and witnessed on the 20th day of April in 1868 and registered in reference to the land transfer on the 3rd of May, 1869. The second was written with the addition of a codicil that was added also on the 3rd of May, 1869 and registered and witnessed on the 3rd of June, 1869 more than a month after Henry Sr.'s death. In it he bequeaths to Sarah

¹⁸ Ontario, Canada Births 1869-1913, Ontario, Canada Deaths 1869-1938

Miller, the wife of his son Thomas Miller, a small four acre corner section of the Sullivan Township farm for her natural life in the event that Thomas predeceased her. It seems unusual that this second will with its codicil, was registered after the first will was probated on May 3rd, 1869. This codicil ultimately proved unnecessary, as Sarah predeceased her husband by 21 years, passing away on the 6th day of November, 1890.¹⁹

By notation in the land transfer book the next transfer of Henry's land was a sale of the east half of the farm, made after "Father" Miller's October 17th, 1911 death.²⁰ His children, Joshua and Julia Miller, and Joshua's wife, Nancy, sold their 25 acres on October 24th, 1911 to James Allen. The next notation regarding Henry's land is on November 24th, 1911.²¹ Nancy Miller (Joshua's wife), who was also the daughter of Rachel Miller-White, sold the west half. This was the part that was jointly bequeathed to her mother Rachel, along with my great Aunt Mary and my great grandfather James. Thus ended the Miller family holdings of 50 acres of land located on Concession 1, Part 1, Lot 22 in the Negro Creek area of Sullivan Township, where Henry and Priscilla Miller had made their home since 1841.

At this point I would be remiss if I didn't give forth an explanation concerning Nancy Miller (wife of Joshua Miller), selling the west half of Henry Sr.'s land, which she did not entirely own. As previously stated, errors were obviously made in the transferring of verbal information regarding wills, land transfers, mortgages, etc., to the written word. Registry clerks had enormous amounts of handwriting to perform every day, describing in large leather-bound books the legalities of these transactions. Researchers of today have had no choice but to recognize and accept the fact that erroneous information sometimes lays within such archival records.

In the case of the November 24th, 1911 sale of the west half of Henry Sr.'s Sullivan Township farm by Nancy A. Miller to James Allen, it is written in the registry records, as follows; *"...by his last will devise the west half of said lot Twenty two to be divided equally between his grand children Mary Miller, James Miller and Rachel Scott subject to a life estate therein to our Thomas Miller. And whereas the said Rachel Scott died intestate and the party of the first part is a natural and lawful daughter of the now said Rachel Scott..."*

We know that Nancy White-Miller was indeed the daughter of Rachel Miller-White (who was erroneously referred to in the abovementioned land transfer as Rachel Scott). Since Rachel was now a deceased benefactor, the case was most likely made that Nancy held legal title to the said land. However, no mention is made within the registering of this land transfer by sale regarding the whereabouts or demise of Rachel's other surviving heirs, my great grandfather James Miller, or his sister Mary.

When Thomas Henry Miller died in 1911, his obituary stated that he was living with his

¹⁹ Ontario, Canada Deaths 1869-1938, Grey County, City of Owen Sound

²⁰ Land Transfer Registrar, Township of Sullivan, Book 242, Instrument #8522

²¹ Land Transfer Registrar, Township of Sullivan, Book 242, Instrument #8544

daughter Julia, and her husband Mr. Brown, at 146 Second Ave East, which was formerly known as Poulett Street. One could determine that this house was most likely situated on the lot that was bequeathed to her in Henry Sr.'s will.

It is documented in the Canadian Census of 1851 that Rachel, along with her husband Scott White and their family, resided in Holland Township beside Thomas Miller (all three are listed as Negroes).²² When further investigation was completed, neither Scott White nor Thomas Miller's name appears in relation to any land transfers of these lots of land. I believe, as happened in many cases, that Scott and Thomas were unable to meet the criteria of clearing and cultivating a specific amount of acreage and moved into Owen Sound, where they may have been better able to find work. By the time the 1871 Canadian Census was taken, Rachel and Scott White and their children had settled in the London, Ontario area.²³

When the 1861 census was taken, "Father" Thomas Miller was residing in the town of Owen Sound with his wife Sarah Boardly and their young family on Scrope Street. It is thought that he was previously married while in Maryland, and from that union, his oldest son Thomas "Henry" Miller Jr. was born. My sister and I have discussed many theories as to what happened to Henry Jr's birth mother. She could have died during childbirth or possibly before they could escape from the Maryland plantation. Perhaps she passed away while travelling on the Underground Railroad with his father Thomas Henry Miller, grandparents Henry & Priscilla, and their daughters, Catherine and Rachel (and possibly Rachel's husband, Scott White).

No wife is listed along with Thomas Miller in Holland Township in the 1851 Canadian Census.²⁴ So we must assume that "Father" Miller married Sarah Boardly after he settled in the town of Owen Sound. She was at least 20 years younger than Thomas Sr. when they married around 1854/55. She bore him a minimum of 12 children before her death at the age of 53 in 1890.

"Father" Thomas Miller's age in most of the documented census, does not correspond to his accurate date of birth. It usually shows him much younger than he really was. In his obituary of October 19, 1911, his age is put at 99, which would make his birth year 1812. However, the 1901 Canadian Census for example, notes Thomas as 80. By the 1911 census taken shortly before his death that same year, they list his age as 101. According to the Canadian government, from 1901 to 1911, Thomas Henry Miller aged 20 years.

Unfortunately, Isaiah and Catherine Miller-Chuckee's children suffered much hardship. Their son John married an English girl named Harriet Mortley and they had three children. Little Harriet died at the age of two, and their surviving two children eventually settled in Windsor, Ontario as adults. Mary Jane married Charles Bird and had at least four children. Thomas Wesley married Minnie Haynes and had seven children. Their first son and daughter died before the age of two and their son Charles Clifford "Chickee" died in his early twenties leaving

²² 1851 Census, Canada West, Grey County, Holland Township, Page 13, Lines 15-18

²³ 1871 Census of Canada, East Middlesex County, Township of London, Page 9, Line 12-18

²⁴ 1851 Census of Canada, Grey County, Holland Township, Page 49, Lines 23-24

behind a young wife, Golden Esther Howard, and two young children. Their four surviving children remained in the Windsor, Ontario area, where many of the “Chickee” descendants still reside.

It seems that John Chuckee and his wife Harriet separated in the mid-1870s. Harriet was living with their son Thomas Wesley and daughter Mary Jane, along with John’s younger brother, William, by the time of the 1881 Canadian Census²⁵ until her death in 1890. William passed in 1901. John did go on to have two more children with a woman named Sarah. Their daughter Catherine, “Cassie”, married a man from Detroit named Thomas Jefferson Lomax and all we know of Arthur is that he died at the Muskoka Free Hospital in April of 1913 at age 29 of tuberculosis.

Catherine and Isaiah’s two daughters, Clarissa and Sarah Ann, stayed in Owen Sound and bore children out of wedlock, but most didn’t survive early childhood. Each married late in life. Clarissa’s daughter Clarissa Jane Chuckee married John Henry from Texas, USA. We also found a few Chuckee grandchildren that died as toddlers, but we have been unable to trace their exact parentage. All of these children are listed as buried in Owen Sound’s Greenwood Cemetery. The surname of “Chuckee” has been difficult to trace due to the many varied spellings within the recorded documents of the time. During their life, both Catherine and Isaiah were illiterate and their surname would have been taken down phonetically by the census takers, birth, marriage and death registrars. We have found many variations of the name; Chalkee, Cuckee, Chuckee, Chickee, et cetera. Hence I am sure that there may be more descendants of this branch of the family still waiting to be found. After finding Henry’s will, we decided to use the spelling that was noted there, which was also the same spelling found in the Greenwood Cemetery transcripts; “Chuckee”. However after Thomas Wesley Chuckee settled in Windsor, all of his descendants have used the spelling of “Chickee.”

My journey to find and trace the life of my fourth great grandfather, Henry Miller, has been a long, often frustrating, yet extremely rewarding experience. To know that my family is descended from a man who was able to escape the chains of slavery and find freedom here in Ontario fills me with pride. Henry Miller left quite a legacy and all of us need to pay him homage. Although I will never know about every aspect of Henry Miller’s life, I do know that he was a true pioneer. When he arrived in Canada West (Ontario), he was a middle-aged man with grown children, and at least one grandchild. He and his family made their way to the most Northern Terminus of the Underground Railroad and settled on a small piece of newly-surveyed land in Sullivan Township, close to the Rocky Saugeen River, around 1841. As a former slave on a Maryland plantation, he would have been no stranger to the back-breaking hard work that it was going to take to forge out a new life in the wilderness of Canada’s north.

With determination and faith in his newly-adopted country, he built a log home while clearing and cultivating a 50 acre working farm, which enabled him to feed and clothe his growing

²⁵ 1881 Census of Canada, Town of Owen Sound, Pages 22/23, Lines 24-25 & 1-2

extended family. Eventually he also acquired a park lot of land within the town limits of Owen Sound which was subdivided and distributed to his heirs. Before his death at the approximate age of 77, he had witnessed his son and daughters marry and give him grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Both Francis Deadman and Henry Miller were runaway slaves. Henry was one of the earliest settlers in Sullivan Township, Grey County. For more than a quarter of a century they toiled on their land to ensure that their children would always have a home where they could raise their children freely without fear or intimidation. Yet for too long both Francis and Henry were lost within the pages of history.

We praise our Black ancestors who courageously made their way to freedom for a better life. It would be a travesty if we allowed ourselves to forget even one of these heroic souls. They walked extreme distances, endured tremendous hardships, and helped each other in an effort to make a decent life in a place where they and their family would be free. Imagine the feeling they must have had to finally be able to own a piece of land, to hold a piece of paper that proved it was theirs. They now could choose where to live and to lawfully marry and were able to feed and care for their own children without that overwhelming anxiety of them being sold away. It must have been surreal at first to realize that you were now able to own property, instead of being the “the property” that was “owned”.

We must continue to stand proud and praise the tenacity and bravery of our pioneering ancestors. The fact is that if those who had walked before us hadn't possessed such strength and fortitude, none of us would be here today. When I think of Henry and Francis, I often wonder how they must have felt when they looked up into the night's sky from their homesteads in Grey County, after living a large portion of their lives in bondage, and to finally be able to live the rest of their lives on their own terms and to die ...free.

ANCESTRAL LINEAGE OF NANCY M. LEE

Francis Deadman
c. 1799 – August 23, 1873

m.

Elizabeth Sikes
c. 1814 – 25 January, 1852

Henry Miller
c. 1792 to April, 1869

m.

Priscilla Miller
c. 1789 - unknown

UNKNOWN

Thomas Henry Miller
c. 1812 – 17 October, 1911

Sarah Boardly
c. 1837 – 6 November, 1890

Catherine Miller m. Isaiah Chuckee

Rachel Miller m. Scott White

Margaret Deadman
Dec 1838 - 29 Jan 1930

Thomas 'Henry' Miller Jr.
c. 1835 - c. 1872

Josephine
Julia
Steven
William Thomas
Frederick
Charlotte
Joshua

Priscilla
Martha
Mary
Rachel
George
Celeste

Priscilla
Wesley
Mary

Nancy A
Bethannie
Silas

James Albert Leraine Miller Feb 18, 1866 - unknown
m. March, 1888
Fannie Jane Buckner Brown Gray - 1856 - 1927

Adelia
Mary Ann
Eliza

John

William
Clarissa
Sarah Ann

Harriet Mortley

Sarah

Adelene Bertha Miller - 1892 - 1965
m. January, 1916
Frank Newton Lee - 1884 - 1966

Harriet
Thomas Wesley Chuckee (Chickee)
Mary Jane

Catherine 'Cassie'
Arthur

Norman Henry Lee - 1918- 1986
m. November, 1953
Nancy Stubbs – 1920 - 1994

Robert N. Lee
Nancy M. Lee
Sandra Lee
Steven J. Lee