



South Carolina Press Association

Hall of Fame

JOHN MILLER 1744-1807

John Miller was the founder of the first daily newspaper in South Carolina and the third daily in the nation on November 30, 1784.

As printer of at least six different major English newspapers and two political magazines between 1770 and 1783, Miller was constantly involved in serious conflict with the English government over freedom of the press. Although rarely mentioned in history books, his role in five legal battles played a significant part in the fight for freedom of the press in England. His freedom of the press struggles entangled him in at least six legal battles for which he was imprisoned three different times for more than two years and fined more than 2,100 pounds between 1770 and 1783.

Born in London in 1744, Miller was apprenticed at age 16 to *The Gazetteer*, the largest daily newspaper in London. After completing his apprenticeship in 1767, he published *The London Evening Post*, *The London Courant*, the *London Mercury*, the *General Advertiser*, the *London Museum*, the *British Monitor*, the *London Recorder* and *Miller's Monthly Magazine*.

Facing imprisonment again when the Revolutionary War ended, Miller started printing *The South Carolina Gazette and Advertiser* in Charleston on March 15, 1783. When he converted it to a daily on November 24, 1784, it became the first daily in South Carolina and the third daily in America.

After two years, he sold *The South Carolina Gazette and Daily Advertiser* to Benjamin Franklin Timothy in 1785 and moved to Pendleton in the sparsely settled upper section of Ninety Six District, which until 1777 had been Cherokee territory.

As the recently opened northwestern frontier of South Carolina began developing, Miller became one of the founding leaders. In 1788, Miller was elected as a delegate for the district on the south side of the Saluda River. He attended the state convention and voted to ratify the federal Constitution in 1788. Two years later he was elected as a delegate for

Pendleton County to attend the state constitutional convention in 1790. He became commissioner to manage elections in 1789, commissioner to locate a court house in 1789 and clerk of court in 1790.

In 1794 Miller became corresponding secretary for the Franklin or Republican Society of Pendleton County. Miller was furious about the Jay Treaty, which he thought was far too generous and contained too many concessions to the British government. He wrote the resolutions of the Franklin Society, a branch of the pro-French Republican Society of South Carolina, and read his resolutions before the assembled militia companies that were gathered around a huge "liberty pole" in Pendleton.

In November 1795, Miller announced plans to start the western-most newspaper in South Carolina, a weekly to be called the *Back Country Gazette of South Carolina and North Carolina & Georgia Courier* but he couldn't find three hundred subscribers in the sparsely settled area. He finally started his last newspaper, *Miller's Weekly Messenger* on January 16, 1807 but died November 26, 1807 at the age of 63.

In the quarter of a century after Miller left England, the fight for freedom of the press continued, but it was not until 1803 that reporters in England finally won the right to sit in the gallery of the House of Commons in England.

Even though Miller had to flee from England before the freedom of the press battles were won, he should be remembered for his passionate participation in the printers' battles against unconstitutional libel laws, his courageous leadership in defying the law prohibiting coverage of Parliamentary debates and votes, his efforts to win freedom of the press in England and his undying efforts to print a newspaper, no matter how remote the location or primitive the conditions. He is one of the forgotten soldiers in the fight for freedom of the press.