

SAMP. 084 2
CRBIB #000746
373/132970
BIOGRAPHICAL PAPER ON GENERAL
JAMES MILLER, COLLECTOR OF THE PORT
OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS, 1825-1849

by: Robert J. Holden - May 1967



IN REPLY REFER TO:

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
Custom House, Derby Street
Salem, Massachusetts 01970

NORTHEAST REGION JUN 9 1967		Initial and Date
Reg. Director		
Asst. to RD (PA)		
Ad'l & State Asst.		
Asso. Reg. Director Adm.		
Assts.		
Budget		
Finance		
Payroll		
Personnel		
Programs		
Property		
Asst. RD, Operations		
Interp. & VS		
Maintenance		
Res. Manage. & VP		
Job Corps		
Staff Archeologist		

H2215

June 7, 1967

Memorandum

To: Regional Director

From: Acting Superintendent, Salem Maritime

Subject: Biographical Paper on General James Miller, Collector of
the Port of Salem, Massachusetts, 1825-1849

Enclosed is a copy of a biographical paper on General James Miller, Collector of the Port of Salem from 1825 to 1849, which has been prepared by Historian Robert J. Holden, who later this month will be transferring to Fort Davis National Historic Site in Texas.

Next to Nathaniel Hawthorne, General Miller is the most important figure in the history of the Salem Custom House. For some little time, it has been felt that facts relating to the life of General Miller should be assembled and available for the instruction of temporary and seasonal members of the interpretive staff and this paper has been prepared entirely from secondary sources with this objective in view.

Work on the paper was performed by Mr. Holden at infrequent intervals as time could be spared from other duties. The desk and chair used by General Miller are on display in the Custom House as loans from the Essex Institute and this paper, in a sense, is the outgrowth of the need for answers to questions asked by visitors.

Mr. Holden's paper promises to be very helpful to future interpretive personnel at the Site and we are very glad to have it not only as a contribution but also a reminder of his tour of duty here.

Edwin W. Small
Edwin W. Small
Acting Superintendent

Enclosure

copy w/enclosure to Chief Historian, WSC

GENERAL JAMES MILLER

**Collector of the Port of Salem, Massachusetts
1825 - 1849**

**By: Robert J. Holden, Historian
Salem Maritime National Historic Site**

May 1967

GENERAL JAMES MILLER

Collector of the Port of Salem, Massachusetts
1825 - 1849

"You have immortalized yourself! My dear fellow, my heart ached for you when I gave you the order, but I knew that it was the only thing that would save us." General Jacob Brown to Colonel James Miller following Miller's successful capture of the British position at the Battle of Lundy's Lane, July 25th, 1814.

Sometimes the immortality of fame can be ephemeral; a century and a half after the above quotation there are few who could identify either Brown or Miller.

James Miller was one of those versatile figures in history; he was successively a lawyer, a brigadier-general, a governor, a representative-elect to the U.S. Congress, and the Collector of Customs at the Port of Salem, Massachusetts. In this last position he spent twenty-four years in the Salem Custom House, now a part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site. In this capacity he was one of the most important historic figures associated with the site; the purpose of this report is to illuminate the highlights of General Miller's life.

James Miller was born in Peterborough, New Hampshire, April 25th, 1776, the son of James Miller of Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian, descent, and his wife Catherine (Gregg) Miller. Peterborough had come into being through land-warrants issued by Massachusetts in recognition of military service and was incorporated in 1769 as a town with a population of less than

500. The town was so isolated in the forested foot hills that there were no roads, but only foot-paths. Just before Miller's birth a child from the village had fallen prey to wolves. From accounts of Miller's early life it would appear that his early years were spent in activities typical of those of a boy raised on a farm in the New Hampshire of the late 18th century. If any trait distinguished him from his peers it was perhaps his tendency toward idleness, but with a certain capacity for bold, self-willed action when the occasion called for it. At one time he led a successful "barring out" among the pupils, compelling the teacher to grant the required holiday, together with impunity to retribution.^{1.} The common school education he received was exceedingly meagre by today's standards. One of his first teachers, however, had been a sergeant in the Revolutionary War, and drilled the boys as part of their schooling. It is probable that Miller's taste for the military was fostered by this process.

At the age of eighteen he was faced with the first major decision of his life; unless he furthered his education he would be destined to follow the plow. Apparently the latter did not appeal to him, so, with a bundle of clothes and \$1.25 in his pocket, he left home to attend the Academy at Amherst. Here for the first time we see evidence of the same perseverance and determination that was later to distinguish his military career. He remained at the Academy until his credit, as well as his funds, was exhausted. He then resorted to teaching, and in this manner, alternating between pupil and teacher, he managed to

complete his education, including study at Williams College in Massachusetts. He then returned to Peterborough, where he studied law under James Wilson and was admitted to the bar of his native state in 1803.^{2.} Moving to the neighboring town of Greenfield, Miller began the practice of his profession as the first lawyer in that town. At this time he married Martha Ferguson who died in 1805 following the birth of their second child. His second wife was Ruth Flint whom he married in 1808 at Lincoln, Massachusetts.

It was while residing in Greenfield that Miller revived his earlier interest in the military and he soon was a Captain in command of the company of artillery attached to the 26th Regiment of New Hampshire Militia. Of larger than average physical size, his military bearing, aptitude, and skill in maneuvering and drill, attracted the attention of General Benjamin Pierce. When, in 1809, Congress resolved to increase the army, Miller received the commission of Major of the 4th Regiment of United States Infantry, the highest commission in the regular army then conferred on anyone from New Hampshire. The commission bears the date March 3rd, 1809, taking rank from July 8th, 1808. He was sent to Fort Independence in Boston Harbor, where he remained until 1811, when the regiment was ordered to Vincennes, Indiana, to join the army of General William Henry Harrison in the war with the Indians.

In 1811 relations with the Indians in the Indiana Territory had reached an impasse when a confederation of tribes, formed under the leadership of Tecumseh, opposed further land-ceding treaties to the whites. The Indians concentrated their forces at Tippecanoe and the United States

strengthened the forces of Governor Harrison by sending the Fourth Regiment of Infantry to his support. Miller, who by this time was a lieutenant-colonel, was unable to take part in the ensuing Battle of Tippecanoe, due to a violent fever which brought him close to death.

General Harrison's dispatch to the Secretary of War following the battle, dated November 18, 1811, contains the following: "I have informed you, sir, that Colonel Miller was prevented by illness from going on the expedition; he rendered essential service to the command of Fort Harrison; ^{3.} he is an officer of great merit."

The ensuing winter Miller spent at Vincennes with the family of Harrison, ~~regaining~~ his health.

The War of 1812 was viewed with grave misgivings by the New England states; in the election of 1812 they had, with the exception of Vermont, voted for Clinton and peace. From the viewpoint of military preparedness the United States was little justified in declaring war. The regular army numbered less than seven thousand men; at no time during the war were more than 35,000 in service. For the most part the country had to rely on state militia, but these militia were often unreliable and often refused to leave their native states. To make matters worse, the United States was lacking in capable military leaders. All the high ranking officers were in their late fifties or sixties and their experience as field commanders was almost non-existent.

The American military strategy hinged on the invasion of Canada, to which all other considerations were subordinated. Despite Canada's small population, its military strength should not have been underrated. Four British regiments were stationed in Canada at the outbreak of the war and the Canadian authorities were more successful in enlisting troops to resist an invasion than the Americans were in getting troops to make one. In addition, the Canadians had much better senior officers and could also count on the help of the Indians under Tecumseh.

The American attack was to be a three-pronged one with William Hull, the governor of Michigan Territory, launching his attack from Detroit. Hull had been an able soldier and officer during the Revolution, but the years had taken their toll. For his conduct in the War of 1812 he was destined to be court-martialed and sentenced to death before the firing squad, although he was granted a presidential reprieve because of his age and earlier record. Miller played a conspicuous part in Hull's ill-fated campaign against Canada.

On the 12th of July, 1812, the American Army crossed into Canada. A detachment under Colonels Lewis Cass and Miller marched toward Malden, a British post. The enemy was engaged at a bridge over the Canard River and driven back on Malden in confusion. At this point, if Hull had come to the support of his subordinates, the fortress could have been taken with ease. Unfortunately, Hull, exhibiting the vacillation and lack of leadership that was to characterize his activities throughout the campaign, refused to sustain the attack and ordered the detachment to return. In addition, he sharply reprimanded Cass and Miller for having exceeded their orders.

After nearly a month of inaction, Hull finally ordered an attack on Malden, but then cancelled it the next day and began a retreat to Detroit after learning that the British and their Indian allies were reinforcing Malden.

On the 8th of August, Hull dispatched 600 men, under command of Miller, to open communications south of Detroit to the Raisin River where provisions were being brought up. When the troops, consisting of militia, as well as his 4th Regiment, were mustered in marching order, Miller rode up in front of them and addressed the militia as follows: "Soldiers, we are now going to meet the enemy, and to beat them..... I shall lead you. You shall not disgrace yourselves nor me. Every man who shall leave the ranks or fall back without orders will be instantly put to death. I charge the officers to execute this order." Then, turning to his own regiment, he said, "My brave soldiers, you will add another victory to that of Tippecanoe - another laurel to that gained on the Wabash last fall. If there is now any man in the ranks of the detachment who fears to meet the enemy, let him fall out and stay behind."

The force marched from Detroit on the afternoon of the 8th, and on the 9th, about 4 p.m., when the Americans had reached the Indian village of Maguaga, the advance troops were fired on from ambush by a British and Indian force of approximately 525 men. Miller, leading the main force in two columns a half mile behind, ordered his men forward at the double quick. He then rode at full speed toward the field of battle. As his troops caught up and formed in battle order, he raised his sword aloft

and led the charge. The Americans benefitted at this point from confusion among the Indian and British forces, and the British withdrew from the conflict, leaving their Indian allies to contest the field with the Americans. The Indians, under Tecumseh, continued to fight on. Miller was thrown from his horse in the attack. The Indians, supposing him to be shot, rushed forward to scalp him, but were driven back and Miller was able to remount. Without their British allies the Indians were finally forced to withdraw with the Americans in pursuit.

Miller pursued the enemy for two miles until the approach of night, the danger of an ambush and the necessary care of the wounded, caused him to suspend pursuit. Miller then sent a messenger to Hull to report his success and asked for a supply of provisions and reinforcements to follow up the advantage gained. However, instead of provisions and reinforcements, Hull sent orders directing the force to return to Detroit. Miller, who had been injured by the fall from his horse, led his disappointed troops back to Detroit the following day.

On August 13, 1812, General Hull sent the following dispatch from Detroit to the Secretary of War: "The enemy were formed behind a temporary breastwork of logs, the Indians extending in a thick wood on their left. Lieutenant-colonel Miller ordered his whole line to advance, and when within a small distance of the enemy, made a general discharge, and proceeded with charged bayonets, when the whole British line and Indians commenced a retreat..... The judicious arrangements made by Lieutenant-colonel Miller, and the gallant manner in which they were executed, justly entitle

5.

him to the highest honor."

By this time Hull's officers and men had become convinced of his incompetence. A group of them tried to persuade Miller, as the senior regular army officer present, to agree to removing Hull from command and assume command himself. Miller declined, but offered to support another officer if this action was decided upon. "It would be a bold step for subordinates to strip a commanding general of his sword and epaulets while at the head of his army, and when they were ready to act, they naturally hesitated."

6.

While this drastic measure was being contemplated, the able British commander, General Isaac Brock, moved his troops in to surround Detroit. Brock then demanded that Hull surrender without a struggle, intimating that he could not be sure what the Indians would do once the fighting had begun. Hull, fearing a massacre, agreed, claiming he was responsible for the safety of the women and children in the fort, and effected the terms on August 16th, without consulting a single officer. This fact Hull readily admitted in a dispatch to the Secretary of War on August 26th, which read in part, ".... A large portion of the brave and gallant officers and men I commanded, would cheerfully have contested until the last cartridge had been expended and the bayonets worn to the sockets. Before I close this dispatch, it is a duty I owe my respectable associates in command, Colonels McArthur, Findlay, Cass, and Lieutenant-Colonel Miller, to express my obligations to them for the prompt and judicious manner they have performed their respective duties. If aught has taken place during

the campaign which is honorable to the army, these officers are entitled to a large share of it."^{7.}

In a letter dated August 27th, 1812, Miller writes, "Only one week after, I with six hundred men completely conquered almost the whole force which they then had, they came and took Fort Detroit, and made two thousand of us prisoners on Sunday, 16th inst."^{8.}

Miller was parolled, but not immediately exchanged, so he did no more fighting that year. Early in 1813 he was exchanged for Lord Dacres, an American-held prisoner.

Meanwhile the two other prongs of the American attack on Canada in 1812 had failed. In 1813, the effort to invade Canada was renewed. In the west, forces under William Henry Harrison, the hero of Tippecanoe, succeeded in recovering ground lost by Hull's ill-fated campaign of the previous year by decisively defeating the British and their Indian allies at the Battle of the Thames. On the eastern Canadian frontier things did not go so well for the Americans and Miller spent the year as part of the futile American campaign against Montreal. In a letter dated November 9, 1813, he says, "We have ended, in my opinion, another disgraceful campaign, much to the dishonor of the American arms. It appears to me that the termination of this campaign will have a worse effect on the public mind than even Hull's itself, and will shake the government to its centre; and could this solemn lesson teach the government to make more judicious appointments of general officers, we might yet retrieve our reputation as soldiers."^{9.}

The year 1814 was destined to be the decisive period of the war. With the downfall of Napoleon's empire, the British were free to turn their full attention to America. With their highly trained and professional army, supported by their victorious navy, they planned to launch an attack from three points; Niagara, Lake Champlain, and New Orleans. Had they been able to do this at the beginning of the war they probably would have overwhelmed the Americans. However, by 1814 the majority of the incompetents among the high-ranking American officers had been removed and, as the state militias had proved unreliable, chief reliance was now placed on the regular army.

On the Niagara front, Major-general Jacob Brown, assisted by Brigadier-generals Winfield Scott and Eleazar W. Ripley, was now in command and Colonel Miller had the Twenty-first Regiment. It was decided to take the initiative by advancing against the enemy before British reinforcements were able to arrive from Europe.

The American forces crossed the Niagara River on July 3rd, 1814, and captured Fort Erie, meeting with only a slight show of resistance. Moving down the Niagara River the American forces met and routed the British and their Indian allies at the Battle of Chippewa on July 5th. Following the Battle of Chippewa, both sides spent the next three weeks maneuvering for advantageous positions.

On the 24th General Rial, in charge of the British forces, moved his command to take up a position near Lundy's Lane. This lane entered the main road below the Falls of Niagara, at a distance of less than

three miles from the American camp. Late in the afternoon of the 25th, following reports of the enemy's presence in the vicinity, General Brown ordered a force of 1300 men under General Winfield Scott to advance toward the Falls of Niagara, "with orders to report if the enemy appeared, and to call for assistance, if that was necessary." 10.

This was a rash move for Brown to make with no knowledge of the British strength and was almost to spell disaster for the Americans.

Brown's order was given late in the afternoon and it was between 5 and 6 p.m. when General Scott's column moved out of the encampment. Reaching Lundy's Lane, Scott sighted elements of the British force and he immediately divided his command to seek out the enemy's right and left flanks. The Americans thus moved forward for battle without knowing they were meeting a vastly superior force. At the same time a lieutenant was sent back to the American encampment to report the enemy's presence.

"The effect of this rash movement - or rather the beginning of it - was, at once, apparent. A handful of men, not more than thirteen hundred in all, and they were divided into two parties, - with two field-pieces only, - had been pushed, without their knowledge, within canister-shot distance of an overwhelming force, which, with its wings thrown forward from its artillery in the centre, appeared to be ready to infold and crush in its embraces those whom the murderous 11. fire of the battery might spare from its slaughter..."

The British force commanded every inch of the ground from a hill on which were located seven pieces of artillery, while supporting it was the entire force of General Rial, together with a heavy reinforcement which had just arrived. The sounds of firing reached the American encampment simultaneously with the arrival of the messenger. General Brown immediately ordered his troops forward to reinforce Scott. This reinforcement included Miller's Twenty-first Regiment.

Scott, in the meantime, had managed to hold his own despite the vastly superior numbers arrayed against him. His position, however, was precarious in the extreme; American losses, particularly officers, were heavy, and their ammunition was running low.

On arriving at the scene of battle, Brown and Ripley immediately noticed the fire of the battery on the hill in the enemy's center. Turning to Miller, Ripley remarked that "unless that battery was carried it would destroy the whole force, or compel it to fall back." General Brown then said, "Colonel Miller, take your regiment, and storm that work and take it."

It was here that Colonel Miller made his reply which was to become famous: "I'll try, sir." In a letter to his wife, dated July 28, 1814, Miller gives the following account of what was destined to be the high-water mark of his life: "I had short of three hundred men with me, as my regiment had been much weakened by the numerous details made from it during the day. I, however, immediately obeyed the order. We could

see all their slow matches and port-fires burning and ready. I did not know what side of the work was most favorable to approach, but happened to hit upon a very favorable place, notwithstanding we advanced upon the mouths of their cannon. It happened that there was an old rail-fence on the side where we approached with a small growth of shrubbery by the fence and within less than two rods of the cannon's mouth, undiscovered by the enemy. I then very cautiously ordered my men to rest their pieces across the fence, take good aim, fire, and rush, which was done in style. Not one man at the cannon was left to put the fire to them. We got into the centre of their park before they had time to oppose us. A British line was formed, and lying in a strong position to protect their artillery. The moment we got to the centre, they opened a most destructive flank fire on us, killed a great many, and attempted to charge with their bayonets. We returned the fire so warmly they were compelled to stand; we fought hand to hand for some time, so close that the blaze of our guns crossed each other; but we compelled them to abandon their whole artillery, ammunition-wagons and all, amounting to seven pieces of elegant brass cannon, one of which was a twenty-four pounder, with eight horses and harness, though some of the horses were killed. The British made two more attempts to charge us at close quarters, both of which we repulsed before I was reinforced, after which the 1st and 23rd Regs. came to my relief. And even after that, the British charged with their whole line there several times, and after getting within half pistol shot of us were compelled to give way. I took, with my regiment, between

thirty and forty prisoners, while taking and defending the artillery....

The officers of this army all say, who saw it, that it was one of the most desperate and gallant acts ever known; the British officers who we have prisoners say it was the most desperate thing they ever saw or heard of. General Brown told me, the moment he saw me, that I had immortalized myself. 'But,' said he, 'my dear fellow, my heart ached for you when I gave you the order, but I knew that it was the only thing that would save us.' "

12.

The taking of this fortified hill by Miller's regiment was the pivotal point of the battle, but heavy fighting continued well into the night as the British unsuccessfully tried to regain their former positions. The British knew that the heights occupied by Miller's regiment, and now reinforced by General Ripley, had to be retaken if they were to win. One eyewitness' account of the first of the British attempts to recapture the hill is as follows: "The bayonet is a potent weapon on the side of high discipline and strong nerves; and especially, when united with the characteristic determination of the British soldier. The charge of the bayonet is not often used, except as a last resort, and then seldom goes beyond the mere crossing of the weapons - one or other party then breaks or retires. But it was not so in this instance. It was maintained, on both sides, with an obstinacy of which the history of war furnishes few examples, and finally resulted in the second repulse of the enemy. A succession of similar charges - sometimes repelled by counter-attacks upon the flanks of the assailing party, and sometimes by the fire of musketry in front, in volleys perfectly deafening - were

continued in rapid succession for nearly an hour, with the same result; until the enemy, having suffered very severely, and wearied with the obstinacy of the combat, and hopeless of success, abstained from farther attacks, and left us in undisputed possession of the field." 13.

After the Americans had held their ground without dispute for an hour, General Brown, who had been wounded, ordered a withdrawal to the encampment at Chippewa. The Battle of Lundy's Lane, or Niagara, or Bridgewater, as it is sometimes known, was over. The significance of this battle for the Americans was that it effectively checked the momentum of the planned British invasion from Canada, and, in the ensuing battle at Fort Erie, the enemy was stopped.

The falling back of the American army to Fort Erie was not due to pressure from the enemy; the British made no move to follow or harass the American force until four days after the battle at Lundy's Lane, at which time reinforcements had arrived to strengthen the British forces.

Immediately on reaching Fort Erie on the 26th of July, the Americans began to entrench themselves. The old fort was the strong point, but the new works were extended more than half a mile from it, along the shore of the lake. The British began their siege of the fort on August 3rd and fell at once to throwing up opposing earthworks and batteries. On the 7th the siege began in earnest as almost continual fire from both sides was kept up. For the next seven days the Americans were constantly on the alert for the attack they knew must come. At two o'clock on the morning of the 15th the American picket gave the alarm of the

approach of the enemy forces under cover of darkness. In preparation for this eventuality the Americans had charged their cannons each evening with canister, grape, or round-shot. The attack that followed was desperately fought by both sides and lasted until daylight with the British finally repulsed.

The British fell back to their positions from which they continued to bombard the fort during the ensuing month. General Brown then decided to take the initiative and make a sallying attack on the British lines. On the morning of the 17th of September, the troops intended to make the sortie were drawn up. The sallying force was divided into two columns; the left, commanded by General Porter, and the right, commanded by General Miller. (Miller had received the brevet rank of Brigadier General on July 25th, 1814 for his distinguished service at Niagara.)

The day was dark and overcast; a thick mist rested upon the lake and river and rain fell heavily. This enabled the American columns to gain their positions without detection. General Porter's forces advanced with such caution that his men were upon the enemy's pickets before they were aware of his presence. General Brown now ordered General Miller to advance and, dashing forward at full speed, Miller and his column charged the British line. His troops penetrated between the enemy's second and third batteries, and carried them both, including the blockhouses in the rear. Miller's attack, in combination with that of the other corps, carried the whole line of British

entrenchments, captured their batteries, destroyed much of their ammunition and stores and greatly reduced the British force by capture, disability, or death. The British fell back to their former position behind the Chippewa, abandoning the field at Fort Erie to the Americans.

Some idea of the intensity of the fighting can be gained through ^{LISTING} the casualties suffered during this campaign. At the battle of Lundy's Lane, the total American strength had been 2,600; that of the British was 4,500. Out of these combatants the Americans suffered losses of 171 killed, 571 wounded and 110 missing. The British losses were 84 killed, 557 wounded, 193 missing and 42 captured. On the last day of the siege of Fort Erie, not including heavy earlier casualties on both sides, the American lost 80 killed, 215 wounded and 226 missing; ^{14.} the British lost 115 killed, 178 wounded and 316 missing.

This victory and the successes at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, coupled with the victory at Plattsburg and the expulsion of the British from Baltimore, gave the United States cause for rejoicing, greater confidence in the future of the conflict and a stronger negotiating position at the peace talks which had been initiated at Ghent.

For his part in this campaign, Miller was given the brevet grade of Brigadier-general and in November, 1814 Congress voted him a gold medal bearing his likeness, his famous words, "I'll try, sir, " and the names of the battles of Chippewa, Niagara, and Fort Erie. The words, "I'll try, Sir!", were embossed upon the buttons of his regiment by direction of the War Department. The state of New York presented him with an ornate sword bearing the following inscription: "Presented

by his Excellency Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor of the State of New York, pursuant to resolutions of the Senate and Assembly of the said State, to Brigadier-General James Miller, as a testimony of gratitude for his services and admiration of his gallant conduct."

A letter General Miller wrote to a friend at the conclusion of the campaign contains the following: "Since I came to Canada this time every major save one, every lieutenant-colonel, every colonel that was here when I came and has remained here, has been killed or wounded, and I am now the only general officer out of seven that has escaped." 15.

Miller remained in the army after the close of the war and in 1815 purchased a farm in Temple, New Hampshire. His life during the next four years was divided between the military and his farm, where as the of the greatest hero³⁶ of New England in the recent war, he entertained local and visiting dignitaries. The General at this period of his life presented an impressive appearance, judging from portraits and the descriptions of contemporaries. According to one description, "In his personal appearance he was highly blessed by nature. He was of large frame, erect and graceful in his movements, and a noble specimen of manly dignity and strength, with a pleasant and agreeable countenance, and a gentle and smooth speech that always impressed strangers favorably." 16.

In 1819, he received the appointment of Governor of the Territory of Arkansas and resigned his commission in the army. This was an act he was afterwards always to regret. Despite his background in the legal pro-

cession, Miller was not constituted to be an administrator or organizer. He was a good soldier, a competent commander, and, apparently a courageous and inspiring leader. He probably merited a higher rank by virtue of his abilities than he held during the war. His prowess in the arts of warfare appears to have been equal or superior to that of most of his senior officers, particularly during the first two years of the war. But, unlike Winfield Scott and Jacob Brown, Miller decided to return to civilian life.

In 1819, Congress created the Territory of Arkansas and established the office of governor, territorial secretary, and three judges of the superior court, all appointed by President James Monroe. On October 9, 1819, Governor Miller, accompanied by some twenty persons, embarked at Pittsburgh. After a journey of 70 days by keelboat, he arrived at the Post of Arkansas, the territorial capitol. The Post of Arkansas consisted of a dozen log huts and a trading post on the banks of the Arkansas River. In October, 1820 the capitol was moved to Little Rock, another tiny log village. Miller was dissatisfied with the location and purchased land 13 miles away at Crystal Mill for his residence. The climate in Arkansas had an adverse effect on his health and much of his time was spent away from the territory. As a result he did not play a very prominent or active part in the affairs of the new territory; most of the duties fell on Robert Crittenden, territorial secretary, and Acting Governor.

Miller returned to New Hampshire, an invalid, in 1823, where his family had continued to reside. He resigned as governor shortly afterwards. In 1824 he was elected a Representative to Congress from his native district in New Hampshire, but, in the meantime received an appointment as Collector of the Port of Salem. Due in part to his poor health, he decided to accept the latter and as a result never took his seat in Congress.

In 1819 the government had decided to build a new Custom House at Salem on the optimistic assumption that the city would continue to be a leading port. However, Salem shipping had gone into a decline following the Embargo Act of 1807, and despite increased activity during and following the War of 1812, it never regained its former prominence. A graphic illustration of this decline are the duties collected for the following years: 1807 - \$1,090,992; 1824 - \$427,792.

Positions in the Customs Service were filled by political patronage and once installed in office the incumbent had only to worry about a change in the national administration that would cost him his position.

The presidential campaign of 1828 between John Quincy Adams, the incumbent, and General Andrew Jackson was a bitter one. One of the first noteworthy incidents following Jackson's inauguration was the removal of a large number of office-holders and the appointment of "Jackson men" in their places. The greatest opposition to the election of Jackson had come from the North where the offices were largely occupied by supporters of Adams. Thus, it was no surprise that the greater part

of the removals were from that region. Until 1829, the holding of public-office had been looked upon as one of the more aristocratic ways of earning a living and had usually been restricted to people from the "upper-classes." Now with the election of Jackson and the "rise of the common man," the Jackson men rushed to Washington to demand jobs. Jackson had great confidence in his friends and supporters and appointed them to office in great numbers during the next few months. One on-the-scene observer gives the following account: "The heads of the executive departments, believing that 'to the victors belong the spoils,' did not leave an acknowledged anti-Jackson Democrat in office, either in Washington City or elsewhere, with a very few exceptions. One of these was General Miller, Collector of the Port of Salem, Massachusetts. The leading Jackson Democrats in Massachusetts petitioned the President for his removal as incompetent and a political opponent, and they presented the name of a staunch Jackson Democrat for the position. The appointment was made, and the name of the new Collector was sent to the Senate for confirmation. Colonel Benton, who had been made acquainted with the facts, requested that no action be taken until he could converse with the President. Going to the White House the next morning, he said to General Jackson, 'Do you know who is the Collector of Customs at Salem, Mr. President, whom you are about to remove?' 'No, sir,' replied General Jackson, 'I can't think of his name, but Nat. Green and Ben. Hallett have told me that he is an incompetent old New England Hartford Convention Federalist.' 'Mr. President,' said Colonel Benton, 'the man you propose to turn out is General Miller, who fought so bravely

at the battle of Bridgewater.' (Lundy's Lane) 'What!', exclaimed General Jackson, 'not the brave Miller who, when asked if he could take the British battery, exclaimed, 'I'll try.' 'It is the same man, Mr. President,' responded Benton. General Jackson rang his bell, and when a servant appeared, said, 'Tell Colonel Donelson I want him, quick!' When the private secretary entered, the President said, 'Donelson, I want the name of the fellow I nominated for Collector of Salem withdrawn instantly. Then write a letter to General Miller and tell him that he shall be Collector of Salem so long as Andrew Jackson is President.' " 17.

And so the years went by with little variation in routine. Miller retained his farm in New Hampshire and made periodic trips there. In Salem he lived in the old Crowninshield mansion, directly across the street from the Custom House, where he "presided at the head of a generous table with the old-school manner of a now-forgotten past." 18.

In 1830, his second wife died; two daughters had died earlier. One son became an officer in the Navy and another graduated from Harvard in 1828 and was slated to succeed his father as Collector. The old General, riding in his two-horse phaeton, was the featured guest at the annual parade of Militia.

The General was also a man of habit. "So long as he was able, it was his practice to frequent the markets and to see for himself what each day offered worthy of his choice. When a fishing-smack was reported at Derby Wharf, loaded down with a fresh catch from the Georges, he

made haste to inspect her fare, and to secure the best. The story goes that, one day, he had selected a noble cod and, turning to the veteran of Lundy's Lane who had attached himself to the General and took pride in acting as his chere-man, addressed his quondam comrade -in-arms with the words: - "Sergeant! could you take that fish up to the house without a basket?" Drawing himself up to the attitude of a regulation salute, the grey old soldier instantly replied, 'I'll try, sir!' And probably neither the General's dinner nor the Sergeant's was the worse for that
19.
adroit reminder of a historic scene."

In 1846, Nathaniel Hawthorne, destined to become one of America's most famous men-of-letters, received a political appointment as Surveyor of the Port of Salem and during the next three years worked with Miller in the Custom House. In 1849, not having the same political immunity as the old General, Hawthorne lost his position after the Democrats had been defeated in the national election. He then began work on his famous novel, The Scarlet Letter. The introduction to this novel contained a lengthy description of the Salem Custom House and his fellow employees. Portions of it give a vivid picture of General Miller and the surroundings in which he spent the last years of his life. It forms a stark contrast to the active military leader of earlier days, but treats the old General with kindly affection. It is quoted at length below because Hawthorne's verbal portrait is one of the most masterful in English prose. It has been read by millions of readers through the years, and, for the vast majority, furnished their only acquaintance with the General.

"There is one likeness, without which my gallery of Custom-House portraits would be strangely incomplete; but which my comparatively few opportunities for observation enable me to sketch only in the merest outline. It is that of the Collector, our gallant old General, who, after his brilliant military service, subsequently to which he had ruled over a wild Western territory, had come hither, twenty years before, to spend the decline of his varied and honorable life. The brave soldier had already numbered, nearly or quite, his threescore years and ten, and was pursuing the remainder of his earthly march, burdened with infirmities which even the martial music of his own spirit-stirring recollections could do little towards lightening. The step was palsied now, that had been foremost in the charge. It was only with the assistance of a servant, and by leaning his head heavily on the iron balustrade, that he could slowly and painfully ascend the Custom-House steps, and, with a tedious progress across the floor, attain his customary chair beside the fireplace. There he used to sit, gazing with a somewhat dim serenity of aspect at the figures that came and went; amid the rustle of papers, the administering of oaths, the discussion of business, and the casual talk of the office; all which sounds and circumstances seemed but indistinctly to impress his senses, and hardly to make their way into his inner sphere of contemplation. His countenance, in this repose, was mild and kindly. If his notice was sought, an expression of courtesy and interest gleamed out upon his features; proving that there was light within him, and that it was only the outward medium of the intellectual lamp that obstructed the rays in their passage. The closer you penetrated to the substance of his mind, the sounder

it appeared. When no longer called upon to speak, or listen, either of which operations cost him an evident effort, his face would briefly subside into its former not uncheerful quietude. It was not painful to behold this look; for, though dim, it had not the imbecility of decaying age. The framework of his nature, originally strong and massive, was not yet crumbled into ruin.

To observe and define his character, however, under such disadvantages, was as difficult a task as to trace out and build up anew in imagination, an old fortress, like Ticonderoga, from a view of its fray and broken ruins. Here and there, perchance, the wall may remain almost complete; but elsewhere may be only a shapeless mound, cumbrous with its very strength, and overgrown, through long years of peace and neglect, with grass and alien weeds.

Nevertheless, looking at the old warrior with affection, - for slight as was the communication between us, my feeling towards him, like that of all bipeds and quadrupeds who knew him, might not improperly be termed so, - I could discern the main points of his portrait. It was marked with the noble and heroic qualities which showed it to be not by mere accident, but of good right, that he had won a distinguished name. His spirit could never, I conceive, have been characterized by an uneasy activity; it must, at any period of his life, have required an impulse to set him in motion; but, once stirred up, with obstacles to overcome, and an adequate object to be attained, it was not in the man to give out or fail. The heat that had formerly pervaded his nature

and which was not yet extinct, was never of the kind that flashes and flickers in a blaze, but, rather, a deep, red glow, as of iron in a furnace. Weight, solidity, firmness; this was the expression of his repose, even in such decay as had crept untimely over him, at the period of which I speak. But I could imagine, even then, that, under some excitement which should go deeply into his consciousness, - roused by a trumpet-peal, loud enough to awaken all of his energies that were not dead, but only slumbering, - he was yet capable of flinging off his infirmities like a sick man's gown, dropping the staff of age to seize a battle-sword, and starting up once more a warrior. And in so intense a moment, his demeanour would have still been calm. Such an exhibition, however, was but to be pictured in fancy; not to be anticipated, nor desired. When I saw in him - as evidently as the indestructible ramparts of Old Ticonderoga, already cited as the most appropriate simile - were the features of stubborn and ponderous endurance, which might well have amounted to obstinacy in his earlier days; of integrity, that, like most of his other endowments, lay in a somewhat heavy mass, and was just as unmanageable and unmanageable as a ton of iron ore; and of benevolence, which, fiercely as he led the bayonets on at Chippewa or Fort Erie, I take to be of quite as genuine a stamp as what actuates any or all the polemical philanthropists of the age. He had slain men with his own hand, for aught I know; - certainly, they had fallen, like blades of grass at the sweep of the scythe, before the charge to which his spirit imparted its triumphant energy; - but, be that as it might, there was never in his heart so much cruelty as would have brushed the down off a butterfly's wing. I have not known the man, to whose innate

kindliness I would more confidently make an appeal.

Many characteristics - and those, too, which contribute not the least forcibly to impart resemblance in a sketch - must have vanished, or been obscured, before I met the General. All merely graceful attributes are usually the most evanescent; nor does Nature adorn the human ruin with blossoms of new beauty, that have their roots and proper nutriment only in the chinks and crevices of decay, as she sows wall-flowers over the ruined fortress of Ticonderoga. Still, even in respect of grace and beauty, there were points well worth noting. A ray of humor, now and then, would make its way through the veil of dim obstruction, and glimmer pleasantly upon our faces. A trait of native elegance, seldom seen in the masculine character after childhood or early youth, was shown in the General's fondness for the sight and fragrance of flowers. An old soldier might be supposed to prize only the bloody laurel on his brow; but here was one, who seemed to have a young girl's appreciation of the floral tribe.

There, beside the fireplace, the brave old General used to sit; while the Surveyor - though seldom, when it could be avoided, taking upon himself the difficult task of engaging him in conversation - was fond of standing at a distance, and watching his quiet and almost slumberous countenance. He seemed away from us, although we saw him but a few yards off; remote, though we passed close beside his chair; unattainable, though we might have stretched forth our hands and touched his own. It might be, that he lived a more real life within his thoughts, than amid the inappropriate environment of the Collector's office. The evolutions

of the parade; the tumult of the battle; the flourish of old, heroic music, heard thirty years before; - such scenes and sounds, perhaps, were all alive before his intellectual sense. Meanwhile, the merchants and ship-masters, the spruce clerks, and uncouth sailors, entered and departed; the bustle of this commercial and Custom-House life kept up its little murmur roundabout him; and neither with the men nor their affairs did the General appear to sustain the most distant relation. He was as much out of place as an old sword - now rusty, but which had flashed once in the battle's front, and showed still a bright gleam along its blade - would have been, among the inkstands, paper-folders, and mahogany rulers, on the Deputy Collector's desk.

There was one thing that much aided me in renewing and re-creating the stalwart soldier of the Niagara frontier, - the man of true and simple energy. It was the recollection of those memorable words of his, "I'll try, Sir!" - spoken on the very verge of a desperate and heroic enterprise, and breathing the soul and spirit of New England hardihood, comprehending all perils, and encountering all. If, in our country, valor were rewarded by heraldic honor, this phrase - which it seems so easy to speak, but which only he, with such a task of danger and glory before him, has ever spoken - would be the best and fittest of all mottoes for the General's shield of arms."^{20.}

In 1849, the General suffered a stroke that left him partially paralysed and he was forced to resign from his position as Collector. He returned to his farm in Temple, New Hampshire where, on the morning of July 4th 1851, he suffered a second stroke and died on the 7th at the age of seventy-five.^{21.}

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bell, Charles H., The Bench and Bar of New Hampshire, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York, 1894
- Blood, Henry Ames, The History of Temple, New Hampshire, C. C. Rand and Avery, Boston, 1860
- Coles, Harry L., The War of 1812, University of Chicago Press, 1965
- Dawson, Henry B., Battles of the United States, Vol. 2, Johnson, Fry and Company, New York, 1858
- Drake, Francis S., Dictionary of American Biography, James R. Osgood and Company, Boston, 1872
- Hamersly, Thomas H. S., Complete General Army Register of the United States of America, T.H.S. Hamersly, Publisher, New York, 1888
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, The Scarlet Letter, Ohio State University, 1962
- Jenkins, John S., Jackson and the Generals of the War of 1812, Jearl. Cihon, Philadelphia, 1854
- Lossing, Benson J., The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, Harpers and Brothers, 1868
- Norison, George Abbott and Smith, Etta M., History of Peterborough, New Hampshire, Richard R. Smith Publisher, Inc, Rindge, N.H., 1954
- Poore, Ben: Perley, Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis, Vol. 1, Hubbard Brothers, Phila, Pa., 1886
- Peterson, Charles J., The Military Heroes of the War of 1812, Jas. B. Smith & Co., Phila, 1857
- Rantoul, Robert S., Clark, De Witt S., and Whipple, George M., A Record of Fifty Years of the Old Ladies Home at Salem, Observer Press, 1910
- Smith, Albert, History of Peterborough, New Hampshire, Press of George H. Ellis, Boston, 1876
- National Cyclopedia of American Biography, TNA, James T. White & Company, 1892

FOOTNOTES

1. Peterson, Charles J., The Military Heroes of the War of 1812, p. 168
2. James Wilson practiced law in Peterborough from 1792 until 1815. He served as representative in the state legislature from Peterborough between 1803 and 1814 and as representative in Congress from 1809 to 1811. Bell, Charles H., The Bench and Bar of New Hampshire, p. 753
3. Dawson, Henry B., Battles of the United States, Vol. 2, p. 87
4. Lossing, Benson J., The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812, p. 278
5. Dawson, op. cit., p. 101
6. Lossing, op. cit., p. 282
7. Dawson, op. cit., p. 116
8. Smith, Albert, History of Peterborough, New Hampshire, p. 149
9. Ibid., p. 147
10. Dawson, op. cit., p. 355
11. Ibid., p. 356
12. Smith, Ibid., p. 151
13. Dawson, op. cit., pp. 360, 361
14. Ibid., pp. 362 & 370
15. General Jacob Brown was born in Bucks County, Pa., of Quaker parentage, on May 9, 1775. In 1798 he moved to New York where he became a lawyer. In 1809 he was appointed colonel of militia and when the War of 1812 opened he held the rank of brigadier-general. He continued to command the northern division of the army until March 10, 1821, when he was appointed general-in-chief of the U.S. Army, which position he retained until his death in 1828. National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. 5, p. 400
 Eleazar Wheelock Ripley was born at Hanover, New Hampshire on April 15, 1782. He was graduated from Dartmouth and became a lawyer in Maine (then and until 1820 a part of Massachusetts). He entered the army in 1812 as a lieutenant-colonel and by April, 1814 had gained the rank of brigadier-general. At the reduction of the army in 1815 he was retained in the service, remaining in the army until 1820, when he settled in Louisiana. There he resumed the practice of law, was sent to the state senate and ^{as} representative of his district in the U.S. Congress from 1835 until his death in 1839. National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. 3, p. 263

15. (continued) General Winfield Scott was born in Dinwiddie County, near Petersburg, Va., June 13, 1786. In 1806 Scott was admitted to the bar. In 1807 he obtained a commission as Captain of light artillery. In March, 1814, he was appointed brigadier-general. He was seriously wounded at Lundy's Lane and saw no more fighting in that war. He remained in the army and in 1841 became commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army. In 1852 he was nominated for the presidency by the Whig Party, but was defeated by Franklin Pierce. He retired as commander-in-chief in 1862. He died at West Point in 1866. National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. 3, p. 502
16. Smith, op. cit., p. 154
17. Poore, Ben: Perley, Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis, Vol. 1, pp. 172, 173
18. Hantoul, Robert S., Clark, De Witt S. and Whipple, George M., A Record of Fifty Years of the Old Ladies Home at Salem, p. 21
19. Ibid., pp. 21, 22
20. Hawthorne, Nathaniel, The Scarlet Letter, pp. 19-24
21. In 1891 the State legislature of New Hampshire purchased the land on the top of Mount Pack Monadnock for a state park in memory of the General. "The General Miller Park was dedicated on June 22, 1892, with speeches and music at the top of the mountain and dinner at the Pioneer House. It is stated that about 3,000 people attended and 700 horses went up the carriage road." Merison, George Abbot and Smith, Etta M., History of Peterborough, New Hampshire, Vol. 1, p. 293