

Miller, Oscar Lee ^[1]

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Miller, Oscar Lee

by Dorothy Long, 1991

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Oscar Lee Miller, orthopedic surgeon and teacher, was born on a small farm in [Franklin County](#) ^[2] near the community of Carnesville in northeastern Georgia, the oldest of ten children of John Clarence Calhoun (1850–1913) and Florence McWhorter Miller (1868–1939). As a youth he helped on the family farm, attended rural schools, passed a teacher's examination, and taught school for several years. After attending the University of Georgia for two years, he studied medicine at Atlanta College of Physicians and Surgeons, receiving the M.D. degree in 1912, shortly before the medical college became a part of [Emory University](#) ^[3]. He completed his internship and residency at the Piedmont Hospital, Atlanta, where he came under the stimulating influence of Dr. [Michael Hoke](#) ^[4], a distinguished pioneer of orthopedic surgery in the South. Miller received further training at Massachusetts General Hospital and Children's Hospital in Boston before returning to Atlanta in 1915 to join Hoke in orthopedic practice.

In 1917 Miller volunteered for service in the army during [World War I](#). ^[5] He became a captain and orthopedic inspector for camps in five southern states. After the armistice he returned to orthopedic practice and teaching with Dr. Hoke. In 1918 Miller married Rose Evans of Thomasville, Ga.

Miller moved from Georgia to North Carolina in 1921, when he was chosen first surgeon-in-chief and director of the North Carolina Orthopaedic Hospital for crippled children, then under construction in Gastonia. Under his direction this institution grew in a few years from its initial capacity of 50 beds to 150. It also developed a national reputation for effective treatment in the days before antibiotics and immunization, when wards were crowded with children suffering from the ravages of osteomyelitis, tuberculosis of the bones and joints, and infantile paralysis, and when few hospitals could offer facilities for the prolonged treatment required by these crippling maladies.

In addition, Miller in 1923 opened, in nearby [Charlotte](#) ^[6], a private office that grew to become the well-known Miller Clinic. He also played a large part in the development of statewide orthopedic services for the medically indigent. In the mid-twenties such care was provided by the orthopedic hospital at Gastonia and its monthly eastern clinic in Goldsboro, and by clinics in a dozen other communities operated with the help of the State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. This work was greatly expanded when the federal Social Security Act of 1935, with the guidance of the U.S. Children's Bureau, provided grants-in-aid to the states to support public clinics and hospitalization for crippled children. With the cooperation of many other individuals and groups, Miller assisted the Crippled Children's Division of the State Board of Health in establishing a system of monthly orthopedic clinics throughout North Carolina. After [Duke University](#) ^[7] established its medical school, Miller cooperated with its first professor of orthopedics, Dr. Alfred Rives Shands, Jr., in the training of students and resident physicians. Not a formal lecturer but an experienced and judicious clinician, Miller taught effectively by precept and energetic example. In 1932 he moved to Charlotte after turning over the North Carolina Orthopaedic Hospital to Dr. William McKinley Roberts, who had been its first resident orthopedist and who remained its second surgeon-in-chief until his death in 1973.

Miller published more than 170 articles on clinical orthopedics and related subjects and was active in a number of professional organizations. He was a member of the American Orthopaedic Association and the American Surgical Association as well as several international groups. He served as chairman of both the Southern Medical and the American Medical associations. As president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in 1941, he was instrumental in introducing the academy's extensive annual program of postgraduate instructional lectures for the continuing education of its members. For twelve years Miller was a consultant to the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. He served for ten years on the National Advisory Committee of the social security program for crippled children and for three years was chairman of the committee. In 1943, as orthopedic consultant for the Children's Bureau, he inspected medical schools and hospitals in Mexico, Central America, and South America, where he promoted the organization of crippled children's services and inter-American orthopedic exchange fellowships. In connection with this work he received a citation from Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor.

Miller was one of ten doctors on the medical advisory committee that helped found Charlotte Memorial Hospital and for a number of years was chief of its orthopedic service. He served the Myers Park Presbyterian Church in Charlotte as a ruling elder for more than thirty years. He was a Thirty-second-degree Mason, a Shriner, and an honorary life member of

Oasis Temple.

Beginning in 1965, Miller's health deteriorated slowly until his death in Charlotte at age eighty-three. Buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Charlotte, he was survived by his wife, Rose Evans Miller, and their four children: Mrs. B. Gales McClintock of Greenwood, S.C.; the Reverend John Neel Miller of Greenville, N.C.; Dr. Oscar Lee Miller, Jr., a biologist with the National Laboratory at Oak Ridge, Tenn.; and Dr. Robert Evans Miller, who continued the orthopedic tradition of his father in Charlotte.

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