



Backstory: Flossie Pemberton Miller

The real Flossie Pearl Pemberton was my family's neighbor in the late 1960s. She married James Miller in 1909 and had six children.

Mrs. Miller wore aprons and bonnets, and her face was always framed with wisps of white hair fastened hastily in a chignon. The year I went to college, she died at the age of 87. In 1968, the year we moved in next door, she was only 75. And we thought she was positively ancient!

I was indeed her protégé. Although I never reached the heights of Mrs. Miller's grand expectations, I did learn to play piano tolerably well. I always suspected (truthfully, I knew) that she whispered my "potential" into the ear of Mrs. Lawson, the music teacher who traveled from school to school in our small town.

Both women worshipped and played music at the same church. How else can one explain an average student being singled out to play solos all through elementary and junior high school? I apologize to my classmates for any undue preference I received! I can't play or sing a note admirably now, but I have retained a deep appreciation for music, thanks to Mrs. Miller's early influence.

In a modest way, Flossie Miller considered herself a cut above the rest because of her education, which couldn't have been much more than a couple of years beyond high school, if that. In her day, such advantages were not used to lord over others; they came with a sense of duty to bring other people along. And that, Mrs. Miller did.

Even to an eight-year-old, it was obvious that Mrs. Miller had many thoughts that would be luxurious to people who are merely struggling to exist. When we knew her, she had very little money, but she was not poor in spirit. Her deep blue eyes suggested that she had already seen our future, that each of us was specially endowed and meant for something grand.

Her appraisals of me were unwarranted, but she was quite correct about my three brothers. One brother has spent most of his adult life in service to his country, another built a highly successful business and the youngest became an indispensable genius at building and making things work. Our family has never forgotten the warmth of Mrs. Miller's love and her belief in us.

Flossie Pearl Pemberton Miller was born December 18, 1890, married December 18, 1909 and died September 12, 1978.--Crystal, DressedHerDaysVintage.com