

Hugh Reid Miller, Colonel 42nd Mississippi Infantry Regiment

Hugh R. Miller was born in Abbeville District, S. C. on May 14, 1812, the fifth child of Ebenezer Miller and Margery Reid. Ebenezer Miller was a farmer in Abbeville District. Miller graduated from South Carolina College, and moved to Pontotoc County, Mississippi in 1835 when the North Mississippi area was acquired from the Chickasaw Indians. His father and brothers also emigrated to Pontotoc. In 1839 he married Susan Grey Walton, whose sisters were married to Robert Gordon and Stephen Daggett, Pontotoc County planters. In late 1841, Miller was elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives as a Whig, serving in the 1842 and 1843 sessions. In November 1845, Miller was elected District Judge of the seventh judicial district composed of Desoto, Marshall, Tippah, Tishomingo, Itawamba, Pontotoc, Lafayette and Panola Counties. He served as circuit judge of the seventh district for the next eight years, until 1853. In 1851 Miller, while a sitting judge, ran as a "Southern Rights" candidate to a state convention called to elect delegates to a convention of Southern States, but was defeated. In 1853, he returned to the fulltime practice of law. In 1854 he was one of the organizers of the Pontotoc Male Academy. Miller apparently served as local counsel to the Mississippi Central Railroad and the Mobile and Ohio Railroad (which was under construction). In late 1860, after Miller organized the "Pontotoc Minute Men," who pledged "to march at a minutes warning to the defense of any Southern State that may secede from the Union at the event of the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States." He ran and was elected on December 20, 1860 as a delegate to the State Convention from Pontotoc County, along with his brother Andrew Miller who was a delegate from Tunica County. Miller was one of the "Committee of Fifteen" that drafted the Ordinance of Secession. Following the Convention, Miller rejoined the Pontotoc Minute Men, which were mustered into the Confederate Army as Company G of the Second Mississippi Regiment. This regiment was ordered to Virginia, where they joined General Bernard Bee's Brigade. They played a key role in the First Battle of Manassas, and Miller was near General Bee when the latter was killed. Following the victory at Manassas, however, there were no significant engagements for the Company for the balance of 1861. They remained at winter quarters at Camp Fisher, near Dumfries, Virginia. In the spring of 1862, the enlistment of many of the Confederate troops who

had volunteered in the spring of 1861 was up, and the regiments in the Army of Northern Virginia were "reorganized:" that is, elections were held for the officer positions. Col. Falkner, Captain John Stone (later governor) and Captain Miller ran for the colonelcy of the 2nd Mississippi. According to Joel Williamson's recent book, *William Faulkner and Southern History*, in the initial balloting Miller came in third, with 129 votes to Stone's 250 and Falkner's 240. Miller had already communicated with Joseph Davis, Jefferson Davis' nephew, concerning the organization of a brigade comprised wholly of Mississippi soldiers, and after his election loss, he was authorized to raise a regiment of volunteers. He returned to Mississippi and on May 14, the 42nd Mississippi Regiment was organized at Oxford, with the election of Hugh R. Miller as Colonel, Dr. Hillary Moseley of Panola as Lt. Colonel and W. A. Feeney of DeSoto County as Major. The 42nd Mississippi Regiment arrived at Richmond on July 3, 1862 and until December was stationed near there in a camp of instruction guarding prisoners and drilling. In December, the regiment, by then a part of Joseph Davis' Brigade (including Miller's former regiment, the 2nd Mississippi and another north Mississippi regiment, the 11th Mississippi, together with the 55th North Carolina), deployed during the winter to Goldsboro, NC, then Greenville, NC, then Franklin, VA. During February and most of March 1863, they were camped near Ivor Station, Virginia. Their only action during this time (December 1862 to March 1863) was an engagement with Union Cavalry at Beaver Dam Church on March 30, 1863. The 42nd, along with the rest of Davis' Brigade, participated in the siege of Suffolk, Virginia, under General Longstreet, from mid-April until the end of early May, whereupon it returned to Ivor and remained there until mid-June, when it, along with the rest of Davis' Brigade, rejoined the Army of Northern Virginia and became part of Henry Heth's Division. Shortly after joining Heth, the 42nd, with the rest of the Division and the Army of Northern Virginia, embarked on the Gettysburg Campaign. Heth's Division was the initial assault force of the Confederate Army on the Union forces at Gettysburg. On July 1, Heth directed the 42nd, 2nd and 55th NC regiments up McPherson's Ridge on the left side of the Casstown Pike. These regiments routed the 147th New York, the 56th Pennsylvania and the 76th New York regiments of Cutler's Brigade as they advanced up McPherson's Ridge. However, other Union troops on the right later charged the advancing Confederate forces, who took shelter in an unfinished railroad cut. When the Union forces charged the cut, its sides were too deep and

steep for the troops to fire, and the Union troops captured a significant portion of the 2nd and 42nd Regiments. Miller and most of the 42nd Miss. Regiment escaped out of the southern end of the cut. However, the action there and earlier had decimated the regiment. On July 2, Heth's Division, which had suffered heavy casualties on the preceding day, took no part in the Gettysburg battle. However, on July 3, the remains of Davis' Brigade, formed part of the left wing of the Confederate assault on the Union forces. Miller apparently was shot in the chest near a fence close enough to the Union forces as to be intermingled with them. His son Edwin Miller allowed himself to be captured by Union forces so that he could search for his father among the wounded. Hugh Miller was ultimately hospitalized in a Gettysburg house, where, after appearing to improve, he ultimately died of his wounds on July 19, sixteen days after he was shot. His son Edwin, with some difficulty, was able to persuade the Union authorities to allow him to transport his father's body back to Richmond, where he was interred initially. After the Civil War, his sons had his (and his wife's) body buried in Aberdeen, Mississippi.