

Exploring the Cemetery – Grace Miller

The May article about Rev. W. Weida and the 1942 confirmation class reminded me that Grace Miller deserves a mention. Grace was a longtime fixture of the Jerusalem Lutheran and Rothsville communities. I must have met Grace at some point, although I don't remember it. But I've heard so much about her from my parents and other people, that I feel as if I knew her well, and I'd like you to remember her or learn about her.

Grace, an only child, was born July 22, 1911, to Ervin Ruhl Miller and his wife, Mary Ann (Buch) Miller. Ervin worked in a shoe factory after receiving an 8th grade education. Ervin's parents, Martin and Mary Miller, are buried in the cemetery. Grace's mother, Mary Ann (Buch) Miller, was the daughter of Isaiah and Mary Ann (Young) Buch, who are also buried in the cemetery. Grace's mother was a homemaker who had the same level of education as her husband.

Grace became a teacher. Her first brush with the vocation was as a graduate of the Sunday School Teaching Class at Jerusalem in 1924 at age 13, and she even played the piano at the graduation ceremony! She graduated from Rothsville High School on May 23, 1929, almost certainly as the valedictorian since she gave the opening "President's Address."

In 1933 she graduated from Millersville Normal School and began her teaching career in Marietta. After one year, she was appointed by the Warwick Township (Rothsville) School Board to teach 5th grade. In an August 1936 edition of the Lititz Record I found mention of her playing a piano solo and reading a Bible verse at the class meeting of the "God's Helper Sunday School Class "of Jerusalem.

She was always active. I found her name among those who gave a circus for the Boy and Girl Scouts of Rothsville in May 1938. That same month she was confirmed as faculty advisor to the school newspaper, then known as the *Rothsville Broadcaster*.

I know that she was at Rothsville in 1941 because I have the graduation photo for that year's class with Grace Miller and Principal Bailey in the middle separating my mother's "nixnutz" cousins, Luther Hackman and Paul Leeking, both of whom died in the second world war.



I believe she may have gone somewhere else or taken a break for a while because in August 1946 the *Lititz Record Express* trumpeted the fact that Grace was returning to the Rothsville faculty as Librarian and Social Studies teacher.

In 1951 I found note of her sponsoring and judging the winners in an Easter egg contest for the elementary children. What didn't this woman do?

The Millers lived in the house just to the south of the church. The back porch was always available to thirsty children, like my aunt Shirley, who wanted to use the pump located there to get a tin cup of water (and get out of church for a few minutes). Hospitality seems to have been a feature of the family.

Kathryn Weida Sheaffer, daughter of Rev. Weida, who triggered the memory of Grace, is noted in a July 1950 article in the Lititz paper as visiting Grace and family.

"Miss Kathryn Weida, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Willard Weida, of Schnecksville, is visiting Mr. and Mrs. Ervin Miller and their daughter, Miss Grace Miller. Miss Weida arrived Friday and will be visiting the Millers three or four weeks."

All of the above memories serve to illustrate that Grace lived a life of constant activity and giving to the community. She was multi-talented and a gifted teacher and mentor. Former students like Chrystine Anderson remembers her as strict, but fair, a no-nonsense disciplinarian and a great storyteller. According to my mother, if something needed to be done, Grace did it.

At some point, she left Rothsville and went on to teach and serve as librarian in the Middletown and Manheim Township school districts before retiring in 1973. She moved to Neffsville and became a member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Grace died April 22, 2005, at the Zion Home and was buried in the cemetery.