

Carroll Yesteryears
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Icon Led Distinguished Journalism Career
By Mary Ann Ashcraft

Carroll County has produced its fair share of exceptional women, but it's safe to say none of them led a more interesting life than Sadie Kneller Miller. March is Women's History Month, a good time to recognize a hometown girl who made it big at the turn of the twentieth century as a photojournalist and female war correspondent.

Keith Richwine, a professor of English at Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College), spent years uncovering what we know about Sadie, beginning with her birth in 1867. She started her journalism career at a local newspaper after graduating from Western Maryland in 1885. One of her favorite assignments was covering sports, particularly baseball. Because she signed her stories with initials, few people realized a woman sports writer had entered a man's domain, but this was just the beginning of a lifetime spent breaking down barriers in the field of journalism.

She moved to Baltimore and began working for newspapers there. After her 1894 marriage to Charles R. Miller, a Baltimore business executive, she enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle and perhaps the freedom to pursue her career without worrying about the next paycheck. She became an excellent photographer, using her pictures to complement her writing. In 1900, *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, one of America's leading pictorial newspapers, accepted the first article and photographs she submitted. Three years later it hired her full-time, but it always allowed her the freedom to choose her own assignments. Over the course of the next 14 years, major events took her from Baltimore to the Balkans.

In 1904 she captured the destructive force of the Baltimore Fire in a series of dramatic photographs, and in 1906 she traveled to San Francisco to record what remained after the earthquake. Two years later she made a lengthy trip to czarist Russia during a cholera outbreak and followed that with a trip to Panama while the Canal was under construction. She even reported on the famous, but much-feared leper colony on Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands. Sadie never had children, so she was able to pursue stories which would interest readers no matter when or where they were unfolding.

She took immense pride in being recognized as the first woman war correspondent after she covered fierce fighting in Morocco between Spanish forces and the Moors in 1909. She filed stories of her experiences just behind the front lines and returned home with pictures of captured Moors held in Spanish prison camps. People noted, "Mrs. Miller's excursion to the battlefields of Morocco where she was the only white woman outside of some Spanish servants, marks an era in journalistic enterprise."

In spite of relishing her adventures in a man's world, Sadie Kneller Miller never championed women's suffrage. She once wrote, "When women's suffrage prevails then my work will be much harder...for chivalry, the innate impulse of man to help a woman, will vanish, and I will have to face against much greater odds."

Sadie's groundbreaking career as a photojournalist ended abruptly in 1918 when she suffered a severe stroke at age 51. She died in Baltimore two years later.

Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.

MRS. SADIE K. MILLER **NOTED JOURNALIST DEAD**



Photo credit: The [Carroll County] Times

Photo caption: The death of photojournalist Sadie Kneller Miller was front page news in The [Carroll County] Times of November 26, 1920. Born in Westminster, she achieved fame as a reporter and photographer for some of America's best-known newspapers.