From faculty minutes

Jan. 27, 1891. Commencement appointments

"The appointments in the class who are entitled to the degree of Master are Andrew McCleod & Morris S. Miller."
Son of Dr. Matthias Burnet and Phebe (Smith) Miller, was born at No. 156 Queen St., New York City, July 31, 1779, and died at his home in Utica, N. Y., Nov. 16, 1824. (These dates are from reliable family records and attention is called especially to the fact that biographical encyclopedias state he was born in 1780, and died Nov. 19, 1824.) He was sent up the river to enter Union College, Schenectady, where he was graduated with valedictorian honors in 1798. He first studied civil engineering, but later decided upon the law for his profession, and studied under Cornelius Wendell, of Cambridge, Washington Co. Governor John Jay appointed him his private secretary in 1804, and he went to Albany with the executive. About 1802, Nicholas Low, a wealthy landowner in Lewis County, who had been one of his mother's boarders, appointed young Miller his agent to superintend the sale of some lands at Lowell and vicinity. Consequently he took up his residence there and remained until he removed to Utica in 1806. It was at that period of his life that he married Maria Bleecker of Albany, whom he had met for the first time at his commencement night ball. She was the daughter of Rutger Bleecker, of Albany, mayor of that city, and his wife Catherine Elmendorf. It is related that the match was not a pleasing to this Dutch family, and he was not as welcome as he might be until their first visit home when they presented their offspring.

On going to Utica, Mr. Miller began the practice of law, and being a man of decided ability and conciliatory in manner, he soon established himself in public confidence. It was within two years that he was made village president, and within four received the appointment of the first named to the position of judge in Oneida county, March 5, 1810. He continued to hold the latter office by successive appointments until he died, meeting with credit and general public approval. He represented his district in the 13th Congress, May 24, 1813 to March 4, 1815, and his first speech was warmly commended by John Randolph. His opponents considered him absolutely fair. His arguments against the war measures won the reputation for him. He was then a Federalist, but some years later became a "Bucktail Democrat," being one of the so-called "high minded gentlemen" who opposed the nomination of DeWitt Clinton. In July, 1819, Judge Miller was sent to Buffalo by Mr. Calhoun to represent the U. S. government at the negotiation of a treaty between the Seneca Indians and the proprietors of the Seneca Reservation. The conference was held in a barn on the treaty grounds, six miles from Buffalo. The warriors, about 300 in number, were crowded closely upon the mow and squatted about the floor where not occupied by Judge Miller and party, including his wife and Hon. Charles E. Dudley, Mayor of Albany.
It is said that when Red Jacket, the chief, was asked what he thought of Judge Miller’s address, he replied puffing out his cheeks and sending forth a tremendous blast of air. Nevertheless, he showed the judge no lack of courtesy, and requested to be presented to the judge’s squaw and papoose.

Judge Miller was a trustee of Hamilton College. His public spirit and liberality were marked characteristics. Everyone acknowledged his merit, and spoke of him as being capable, conscientious, intelligent, refined and hospitable. Henry Arthur in a commemorative discourse said: "He possessed an ardent and well-cultivated mind, a frank, humane and generous disposition. To the more solid qualities of the mind were added a singleness and warmth of heart, an affability and cheerfulness of deportment, and an urbanity of manners, which were not confined to his friends only, but diffused around him. Blessed by Providence with the means of relieving the wants of others, his benevolence was active and uniform. His purse was always open at the call of the needy. From sordid parsimony and narrowness of spirit, no man was ever more perfectly free. To his particular friends Judge Miller’s social intercourse added grace and delight." He was much attached to the Episcopal Church and did much to promote its welfare, yet did he respect the liberty of conscience in others, giving the land and helping to build Trinity Church at Utica, of which he was vestryman and warden. He was prompt in his affairs; neat but fastidious, and in physical frame ran to no extremes, seemingly well-knit, with regular features. He managed the Bleecker estate. His home was at the lower end of Main St., Utica, facing the north, a two-story, wooden house, and he was preparing to erect a stone house when he died.

Judge Morris Miller Smith married Maria Bleecker, at Troy, N.Y., Aug. 10, 1804, Rev. Jonas Coe officiating. She was born at Albany, Sept. 18, 1780; died at Utica, March 22, 1850, daughter of Hon. Rutger and Catherine (Elmendorf) Bleecker. She was a zealous Christian character, and the principal person to help build the old Reformed Dutch Church in Utica, in 1830. She has been described as "a lady of the old school, simple in manners, grave and dignified in her deportment, commanding the respect of those around her without repelling their affections." Judge and Mrs. Miller were buried in the plot of John Bleecker Miller, their son, in the Utica Cemetery.
CLASS OF 1798.

MORRIS SMITH MILLER.

Son of Matthias
Born 1779
Died November, 1824.
Buried at Utica, N. Y.
Married, 1804, Maria, daughter of John Rutger
Bleecker and Catharine Elmendorf, of Esopus.

Issue:
Rutger Bleecker, b. July 18, 1805
m. Mary Seymour, July 28, 1828,
    dau. of Henry (Bro. of the Gov.)
Genl. Morris Smith (U. S. A.)
m. Jane, dau. of Genl. Alexander
    Macomb, U. S. A.
Sarah, m. Edward S. Brayton, of Utica.
Charles Dudley, m. Elizabeth, dau. of the Abolition-
    ist, Gerrit Smith, of Peterborough.
John Bleecker, b. 1820; m. Dec. 26, 1850, Cornelia,
    dau. of Hon. Samuel W. Jones.

The Jones Family
John H. Jones.
New York
1907.

"On MORRIS S. MILLER, 1798, was a resident of Utica, and a member of the
Philomathecian Society. He died in 1824.

PHIL OMATHEAN CATALOGUE 1830."
DIED:– In Utica, on the 9th inst., Maria Bleecker, relict of Morris S. Miller, aged 69 years.

Daily Albany Argus
March 13, 1850
I would like to utter the pleasant thoughts that rise to my memory as I recall the name of Morris S. Miller, that most finished and accomplished gentleman, the life of every social circle that he entered, and the dispenser of a graceful and bountiful hospitality at his residence on Main street, in what was then the court end of the town, a place of which I have a most distinct and vivid recollection, and where, although then quite a youth comparatively, I was not an unfrequent visitor. He represented the County of Oneida in the Congress of 1812, and attracted considerable notice, as well as gained some reputation, by several speeches he made against certain war measures of the administration, to which he was strongly and, without doubt, conscientiously opposed; and he presided over the Common Pleas of Oneida for thirteen years, in those palmy days when it was frequented by our best lawyers, and when its jurisdiction was much larger than it has been since the constitution of 1846, and in that position he earned the reputation of a just, discriminating and impartial judge. He fell a victim, at the early age of forty-four, to a painful disease, which he bore with wonderful patience and christian fortitude, sustained by that faith which he had for many years professed, and in which he was a devout believer.

Early Bar of Oneida
A Lecture delivered at the Court House in the City of Utica
October 13, 1875
By William Johnson Bacon.
Utica, N. Y.
1876
1798  Morris S. Miller

Had been the private secretary of Gov. John Jay, and married a Miss Bleecker, of Albany. He removed from Lowville to Utica, where he resided till his death, Nov. 16, 1824, aged 44 years. He was a member of the 13th Congress and held the office of First Judge of Oneida County from 1810 till his death. He was a gentleman of fine manners and extensive acquirements, but his brief residence in this section scarcely allowed him to become generally known to our citizens.

History of Lewis County
Foot note p. 148
Franklin B. Hough
1883

His son Rutger B. Miller was a well known lawyer of Utica  p. 313
Children:

1. Rutger, b. at Lowville, N.Y., July 18, 1805; d. at Utica, N.Y., Nov. 11, 1877; m. July 28, 1828, Mary Seymour.

2. Gen. Morris Smith, b. at Utica, Apr. 23, 1814; d. at New Orleans, La., Mar. 11, 1870; grad. U.S. Mil. Acad., 1834.


5. John Bleecker, b. Utica, Nov. 7, 1820; d. Toulon, France, Apr. 22, 1861; he read his rudimentary education at Utica and then was sent to the Jesuit College in Montreal at the earnest request of Senator Kernan, an intimate friend of his brother, John B. Miller, which he regretted most bitterly, as his letters testify. He finally entered Harvard Coll., and later Pres. Buchanan appted him Consul-General to the Haissestadt, residence in Hamburg. He was an Episcopal, and vestryman in St. George's Ch., Utica. He m. in that city, Dec. 26, 1850, Cornelia Jones, b. in that city; d. at her home, No. 56 West 9th St., N.Y. City, Dec. 7, 1901, daut. Judge Samuel Williams & Maria Bowers Duane.

6. Burnet, b. Utica, Sept. 12, 1807; d. there Sept. 20, 1808

7. Catherine Elizabeth, b. Utica, Sept. 12, 1807; d. there Sept. 20, 1808.

8. Burnet, b. Utica, Dec. 26, 1809; d. there Mar. 7, 1810

9. Catherine Elizabeth, b. Utica, Mar. 21, 1812; d. there Aug. 7, 1814.

Guyler Reynolds
N. Y. 1914.
CLASS OF 1798

MORRIS SMITH MILLER

Son of Matthias Burnett and Phebe (Smith) Miller. Was Member of Congress from Oneida Co., N. Y.
A son, Rutger B., was also in Congress and a daughter married the Late Gov. Horatio Seymour.
A son of Rutger B., Morris S., is a lawyer in New York City.

The Refugees from Long Island p. 466
Frederic Gregory Mather
Albany, N. Y.
1913.
MILLER, Morris Smith, (father of Rutger Bleecker Miller), a Representative from New York; born in New York City, 1779; was graduated from Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., in 1799; studied law and was admitted to the bar; served as private secretary to Governor Jay, and subsequently in 1806, commenced the practice of his profession in Utica, N. Y.; president of the village of Utica in 1808; judge of the court of common pleas of Onondaga County from 1810 until his death; elected as a Federalist to the Thirteenth Congress (March 4, 1813–March 3, 1815); represented the United States Government at the negotiation of a treaty between the Seneca Indians and the proprietors of the Seneca Reservation at Buffalo, N. Y., in July, 1819; died in Utica, N. Y., November 18, 1824; interment in the Rural Cemetery, Albany, N. Y.
Morris Smith Miller of Utica, N.Y., born in New York City, July 31, 1779, died in Utica, N.Y., Nov. 16, 1834. Grad. Union College, private secretary to Gov. Jay, 1810, County Judge 1810-24, Congressman 1813-5, M. Aug. 10, 1801, Maria Bleeker, dau. of John Rutgers Bleeker of Albany, N.Y.

(R. M. Bleeker 7. 10. 6. 1850. 1890)
"Prominent among the newcomers of the year 1806 was Morris S. Miller. He was the son of Dr. Matthias Burtett Miller, of Long Island, a surgeon attached to Colonel Rutger's regiment. Morris S. Miller was born in 1780. Upon the death of his father, who was still in the army, his mother opened a boarding-house. Young Miller graduated with honors at Union College in 1798. He read law with Cornelius Wendell, of Cambridge, Washington Co., N. Y., and was soon after appointed private secretary to Governor Jay. About 1802, Nicholas Low, a wealthy landholder of Lewis County, made him his agent for the sale of his lands in the neighborhood of Lowville, where he remained until his removal to Utica, in 1806. During his residence at Lowville he married Miss Maria Bleecker, of Albany.

Immediately upon his arrival in Utica he commenced the practice of his profession, and rose rapidly in the estimation of the public. Within two years he was chosen president of the village board, and within four years was appointed first judge of the county, which last-named office he continued to hold by successive appointments until his decease. In 1813-15 he represented his district in Congress, where he won the respect of many of the leading minds of the day.

In July, 1819, Judge Miller represented the United States at a treaty made with the Seneca Indians near Buffalo. He also held the position of trustee of Hamilton College, and many others at various times during his life. He was managing agent for the Bleecker estate, of which his wife was one of four owners. He occupied the house at the lower end of Main Street previously occupied by Peter Smith and James S. Kip. He was a strict and faithful attendant of the Episcopal Church, a sociable neighbor, and noted for his acts of charity and the generous hospitality which was dispensed at his mansion. A short time before his death he had made extensive preparations to erect a new dwelling at the head of John Street, "where his son, Rutger B. Miller, erected in 1850, the fine stone mansion which now forms the central building of the Rutger place."

(The present residence of Roscoe Conkling.)

His death occurred November 19, 1824, when he was in his prime. His remains were buried at Albany. His wife survived him for more than a quarter of a century, and died March 15, 1850. Their children were Rutger Bleecker, recently deceased, Morris Smith, brevet brigadier-general, United States Army, died in Texas, March 11, 1870; Sarah (Mrs. E. S. Brayton), died May 10, 1883; Charles Dudley Miller, of Geneva, N. Y.; and John B., editor and lawyer, who died Consul at Hamburg, April 22, 1861."

FROM History of Oneida County, N. Y. Samuel W. Durant Everts & Parke Philadelphia, Pa. 1878
Morris S. Miller had been private secretary to Governor Jay, and married a Miss Bleecker of Albany. He removed from LOWVILLE to Utica, where he resided till his death, Nov. 16, 1824, aged 44 years. He was a member of the 13th Congress, and held the office of first judge of Oneida county from 1810 till his death. He was a gentleman of fine manners and extensive acquisitions, but his brief residence in this section scarcely allowed him to become generally known to our citizens.

FROM History of Lewis County, N. Y. p. 148
Franklin B. Hough
Munsell & Rowland
Albany 1860
He was born in 1760, and was the son of Dr. Matthias Burnett Miller of Long Island, a surgeon during the war of the Revolution, attached to the regiment of Col. Rutgers. On the death of Dr. Miller, while still in the service, his widow opened a boarding house in the city of New York, and thus obtained the means to support her family and educate her son. He was sent to Union College, where he was graduated with valedictorian honors in 1788. He studied law with Cornelius Wendell of Cambridge, Washington county, and then became private secretary to Governor Jay. About 1802, Nicholas Low, a wealthy landholder in Lewis county, who had been one of his mother's boarders, appointed him as his agent to superintend the sale of lands at Lowville and its vicinity. There Mr. Miller resided until his removal to Utica in 1806. During the course of that residence he was untied to Miss Maria Bleecker of Albany, a lady whom he had met for the first time at a ball given on his Commencement night. The match was not a pleasing one to the conservative old Dutch family to which the lady belonged. And it was not until after their visit home from Lowville, when he presented his eldest child, then an infant of six weeks, as a sample of a Black River trout, that the friends became fully reconciled.

Upon his arrival in Utica, Mr. Miller began the practice of his profession, and being a man of decided ability, well versed in the law, and conciliating in manner, he soon established himself in the public confidence. Within two years he was made president of the village, and within four years he received the appointment of the first judge of the county. The latter office he continued to hold, by successive reappointments, until his decease, discharging its duties with credit and public approval. In 1813-15 he represented his district in the thirteenth Congress. His first speech received the warm commendation of John Randolph. By it and by others directed, likewise, against the war measures of the administration, he gained some reputation. He was then a Federalist, but some years later he deserted his former political friends and became a bucktail democrat, being one of the so-called "high-minded gentlemen" who opposed the nomination of DeWitt Clinton. Having decided to attach himself to the new party, he addressed a letter to Erastus Clark giving his reasons therefor. There had been a conversation between the Judge and Mr. Clark relative to calling together the Federal committee, and in his letter Judge Miller said he could not attend this committee meeting because he had left the Federal party. This letter was published in the Albany Argus. The letter of Mr. Clark in reply, which was also published, was in its original form extremely caustic, but was very much modified and softened, as it is said, by the request of his wife, to whom he read it, and whom he afterwards thanked for her advice. There continued to be friendly correspondence between
these gentlemen while they lived, but their former political intimacy was not, of course, renewed.

In July 1831, Judge Miller was sent by Mr. Calhoun to Buffalo to represent the United States Government at the negotiation of a treaty between the Seneca Indians and the proprietors of the Seneca Reservation. The Conference was held in a barn on the treaty grounds, six miles from Buffalo; the warriors, some three hundred in number, being closely crowded upon the floor and in the corners of the floor, of which the greater part was occupied by Judge Miller and his party, including his wife, Charles E. Dudley of Albany, Peter B. Porter of Buffalo, Mr. Ogden and others. The rosy and beautiful boy Mrs. Miller held asleep in her arms, fixed the admiring gaze of the Indians, and was probably of more interest than the Judge or his speech. It is said that Red Jacket, the chief, on being asked what he thought of Judge Miller's address, replied by puffing out his cheeks and sending forth a tremendous blast of air. Whether this gesture was simply indicative of opposition to the arguments made use of and an attempt to demure them with the listeners, or whether the chief really regarded the oration as mere wind, "sound and fury signifying nothing," is best interpreted by those who are conversant with Indian character and usages. Certain it is that in other respects he showed no lack of consideration for the commissioner, and having been presented to his squaw, insisted on knowing the papoose also. To the honor of the Judge it should be added that the only comment made upon his work by Mr. Calhoun was a comment upon the smallness of his account.

Besides the offices we have mentioned, and a trusteeship of Hamilton College, he held other positions of trust and honor. For his public spirit and liberality were active, and his merit acknowledged; capable and conscientious, intelligent and refined, courteous to all, and hospitable almost to excess, he was deservedly esteemed, and his standing was one of mark and influence. His character is well depicted in a commemorative discourse by his pastor, Rev. Henry Antion, from which I extract a passage: "He possessed an ardent and well cultivated mind, a frank, humane and generous disposition. To the more solid qualities of the mind were added a singleness and warmth of heart, an affability and cheerfulness of deportment, and an urbanity of manners which were not confined to his friends only, but diffused around him. Blessed by Providence with the means of relieving the wants of others, his benevolence was active and uniform. His purse was always open at the call of the needy. From sordid parsimony and narrowness of spirit no man was ever more perfectly free. In his address and deportment he was kind and affable to all. To his particular friends Judge Miller's social intercourse added grace and delight. The cheerfulness of his welcome; the assiduity of his attentions, the kindness and open-heartedness of his reception, were features conspicuous in his character." "In his friendships he was warm and sincere, sometimes to a degree bordering on enthusiasm."
"To the church especially," says Mr. Anthon, "it is a
time to mourn. In him she has lost one of her founders;
one of her warmest friends; one of her firmest and
most liberal supporters. A striking trait in his
character was his attachment to the Episcopal Church,--
an attachment not hastily formed, but the result of a
rational, diligent and well-matured inquiry; yet whilst
he valued his church before every other, he freely
conceded to all that liberty of conscience which he
required for himself," and willingly cooperated with
those of a different faith in efforts to promote good
morals and extend evangelical religion. An elderly
person still living relates the following incident:
"I happened to be at Rome in the winter of 1815-16 where
the Judge was holding the Court of Common Pleas. A
trial was going on which excited much interest and in
which two important witnesses had been examined on
opposite sides of the case, whose testimony was so directly
opposed to each other's that either one or the other
must have been perjured. Judge Miller, in his eloquent
charge to the jury, said that they must reconcile the
lamentable conflict of testimony the best way they could
to secure the ends of justice, and so warmly expressed
his feelings in witnessing such an unfortunate scene of
human frailty as to draw tears not from himself alone
but from the whole audience." It may be added that he
was prompt in his affairs, neat to fastidiousness in his
person and his grounds, and though neither tall nor spare,
being rather midway of extremes, his frame was both
delicately and firmly knit and his features regular and
pleasing. Throughout his residence he managed the
interests of the Bleecker family in Utica—an estate
which was thought to be worth four hundred thousand
dollars, and of this Mrs. Miller owned one quarter.
They occupied the house at the lower end of Main street,
already spoken of as the earlier residence of Peter Smith
and also of James S. Kip. It was a two story house of
wood, painted yellow and having a piazza on the front
or north end. The grounds about it were ample, and the
garden well stocked with fruit trees, especially the
Bleecker or Orange plum, which the Judge first introduced
here from Albany. Free as he was in dispensing this
choice plum among the gardens of his neighbors, he was
equally free in disseminating the products of his
extensive orchard of grafted apples. This orchard
filled the space now bounded by West, Rutger, Steuben
and South, and from it any farmer who would be at the
trouble to plant them might take fifty young trees.
Before his death Judge Miller had made preparations to
build at the head of John street, had put out the
shrubbery and shade trees, and had erected a wall in
front of the site where his son, Rutger B. Miller,
erected in 1830 the fine stone mansion which now forms
the central building of the Rutger place. His death
occurred while he was still in the prime of his years,
November 19, 1824. His remains were taken to Albany
for interment.
Mrs. Miller survived him upwards of a quarter of a century, living in the house he was himself preparing to build, and died March 15, 1850. She was in her turn a zealous co-operator, and indeed the principal agent in the organization, in 1830, of the Reformed Dutch Church. "She remained to the last a lady of the old school, simple in her manners, grave and dignified in her deportment. To a quiet resolution and energy of mind that fitted her for trying and difficult occasions, she added," says her pastor, Rev. Charles Wiley, "a grace and gentleness of female propriety that were never for a single instant forgotten, and that enabled her to command the respect of those around her, without at the same time repelling their affections."

Their children were Rutger Bleecker, still living in Utica; Morris Smith, Brevet Brigadier General United States Army; who was educated at West Point, bore a part in the Florida and Mexican wars, and in that for the Union, and died in Texas March 11, 1870; Sarah, (Mrs. E. S. Brayton), died May 10, 1863; Charles Dudley of Geneva, New York; and John B., editor and lawyer, who died while consul at Hamburg, April 22, 1861.

FROM The Pioneers of Utica pp233-237
M. H. Bagg
Curtiss & Childs
Utica 1877.

Full page portrait accompanies this sketch.