



Thomas Ezekiel Miller

Thomas Ezekiel Miller was born June 17, 1849, in Ferrebeeville, South Carolina near present-day Ridgeland. He was raised by Richard and Mary Ferrebee Miller, both freed slaves. Due to his fair skin, there was much speculation about his biological father. In 1851, Miller moved to Charleston with his family where he attended illegal schools for free Black children.

Miller attended Lincoln University in Chester County, Pennsylvania and upon graduation in 1872, he returned to South Carolina where he became school commissioner of Beaufort County. Later he studied law at the recently integrated University of South Carolina before returning to Beaufort to set up his practice. Miller was elected to the South Carolina General Assembly where he served until 1880 when he went to the state Senate.

Miller returned to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1877 and served on the Republican State Executive Committee from 1878 to 1880 and was state party chairman in 1884.

In 1890, Miller served in the U.S. House of Representatives in the seat formerly occupied by Black Representative and Civil War hero Robert Smalls, although he only served for a few months due to election fraud, which many registered Black voters were prohibited from casting their ballots resulting in his opponent, incumbent William Elliott being initially declared the winner. After his time in Congress, Miller remained active in politics, serving as a member of the 1895 Constitutional Convention. He helped establish South Carolina State University in 1896 and served as their first president until 1911.

Miller was married to Anna Hume and had nine children. He passed away in 1938 in Charleston, South Carolina.

2022

*South Carolina
African American History Calendar*

Use Thomas Ezekiel Miller's bio and the paragraph below to answer the questions on this page.

Thomas Ezekiel Miller was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1874, during the era known as Reconstruction. Reconstruction resulted after the end of the Civil War from 1865 through approximately 1876. During this time, African Americans held political office, received their right to vote, and established free public education amongst many other historic events. After the end of Reconstruction, many laws were established that purposefully kept African Americans from having equal rights known as Jim Crow laws.

1. What is the name of the town near Ferrebeeveville?
2. Why was there much speculation about the father of Thomas Miller?
3. What was Thomas Miller's first position when he returned to South Carolina after graduating from Lincoln University?
4. What is the name of the era that occurred after the Civil War?
5. Why did Thomas Miller only serve a few months in the U.S. House of Representatives?

Write down 3 things you learned about Thomas Miller, 2 you found interesting about him, and 1 thing you would like to learn more about.

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