

A Walking Cane Leads Down Memory Lane to Dr. Lewis Leprilete Miller

MARY KORR
RIMJ MANAGING EDITOR

An email from an antique cane collector, seeking information on **DR. LEWIS LEPRILETE MILLER**, who served as president of the Rhode Island Medical Society from 1846–1847, engendered this Heritage column.

Phyllis Feigenbaum had recently purchased an antique cane and a daguerreotype belonging to Dr. Miller's estate. In the email, she said the items were part of a collection from the family's estate and sold on eBay. "The cane has an ebony shaft with a gold collar, along with two gold square eyelets and a rectangular gold plaque with an inscription that reads, L.L. MILLER to L. HOWE. As a presentation cane, Dr. Miller had intended to gift the cane to L. Howe; however, the cane was either never presented or

at some point, was returned to the family.

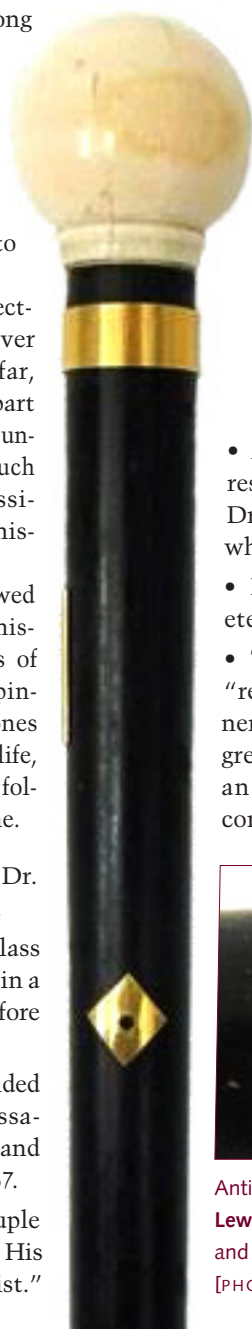
"I have collected canes for over 20 years. By far, my favorite part of collecting is uncovering as much history as possible on these historic gems."

RIMJ reviewed medical and historical records of the era to pinpoint milestones in Dr. Miller's life, shown in the following timeline.

- Born in Franklin, Massachusetts, in 1798, to Dr. Nathaniel Miller, and Hannah (Boyd) Miller.
- Brown University, AB, Class of 1817; MD, Class of 1820, stated **CHARLES W. PARSONS, MD**, in a history of Brown's first medical school read before the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1881.
- 1820–1827: Practiced at a private hospital founded by his father, a surgeon, in Franklin, Massachusetts. He then removed to Providence, and practiced at 49 Broad Street from 1827 to 1867.
- 1822, married Electra Smith of Bristol; the couple had three children: Nathaniel, Jane, and Ellen. His son would go on to become a physician "oculist."



Daguerreotype of **Lewis L. Miller, MD**, c.1850



This portrait of **Dr. Lewis Leprilete Miller** was presented to the Rhode Island Medical Society in 1905. *The Providence Medical Journal* reported that it is "an excellent likeness as he appeared in his old age." [PHOTO: RI MEDICAL SOCIETY]

- According to the Biographical Cyclopedica of Representative Men of Rhode Island, published in 1881, Dr. Miller experienced a "paralytic shock" in 1867, which forced him to retire.
- He died in 1870 and is buried in Swan Point Cemetery, among the many medical notables of that era.
- The Biographical Cyclopedica eulogized him as "remembered by his friends as possessing firmness of nerve and calmness of temperament, combined with great gentleness of manner...As a surgeon he acquired an enviable reputation, and his services were in constant demand." ❖



Antique cane measuring 35 inches in length once belonged to **Lewis Leprilete Miller, MD**. It has an ebony shaft with a gold collar and plaque inscribed, "L.L.MILLER to L. HOWE."

[PHOTOS: PHYLLIS FEIGENBAUM]