

Enoch Miller Building in Mifflinburg

By Alicia Pucci

Building Mifflinburg

By the 1860s, the borough of Mifflinburg held the title as Pennsylvania's center for buggy manufacturers. After a period of slow growth, it had entered the buggy era. The village was bustling with entrepreneurs, who despite the Panic of 1893, started businesses such as: Watson Motors (1876), the Kurtz Overall Factory (1898), H.L. Klose and Sons (1913), and Shively's Meats (1918). The influx of population was evident in the introduction of functional architecture to the Victorian section of "old town."

At the turn of the 19th century, local architects and builders decided to implement older and more affordable methods of residential and commercial architecture. The cost of constructing an unadorned, rectangular brick frame structure was considerably less in price and labor time in comparison to the elaborate and expensive architectural styles that were typical of the period in prolific areas. This decision was monumental in that it provided the stable foundation that the village needed to allow them to be known as a thriving borough.

Enoch Miller, Mifflinburg Architect and Builder

Although not a founding father of Mifflinburg, the accomplishments of well-known architect and builder Enoch Miller truly exemplified and jumpstarted the practicality and innovativeness that characterized the citizens of a rising town.

Enoch Miller was born November 4, 1835 on a farm in West Buffalo Township. At the age of fifteen he went to Mifflinburg and studied the carpenter's trade under Joseph E. Boop, the foremost architect of that time. After learning with him for two years as an apprentice and one year as a partner, Miller decided to establish his own business and take over where Boop left off.

On September 20, 1856, Miller married the former Miss Sarah Katherman. Four years later, he built his own house and shop on the corner of 6th and Market St. in order to launch his business, which would establish him as one of the major builders of the area for the next forty years.

In 1875, Miller built and began operating his own planing mill with the employment of a group of sixteen men for the manufacture of doors, sashes and all sorts of finished woodwork for interiors. His influence in the building sphere was significant and consequently one of his personal reviews for Frink's Reflectors was published in Volume 44 of "American Architect and Architecture" in 1894.

Despite the fact that Miller learned his trade informally, his unique style is reflected in his creative touches. Architecture characteristics typical of his early designs include corner bricks arranged to resemble quoins, framed windows, gabled roofs, and later, as the town progressed, ornamental spindled porches.

Over the course of his lifetime he constructed churches, banks and business blocks, specifically most of the brick houses in Mifflinburg between 1880 and 1915. Some of his well-known buildings include the Farmers' Bank on Chestnut Street (1889), Gothic Ray's Church (St. Peter's Lutheran and Reformed) (1883), and Henry Gast's store at 352 Chestnut Street. The latter's brick façade changed the appearance of the entire block.

Enoch Miller's private dwellings, such as those found at 329 and 330 Market, possess distinguished Georgian features paired with Greek styled porticos. The presence of gingerbread, most common of folk architecture, is additionally seen at the home located at 411 Market Street.

Miller died in 1923 at eighty-eight years old. He practiced his trade despite the onset of old age, causing his legacy to live on in the creative personal touches of each of his buildings that are still present and occupied by caring owners in Mifflinburg.

Take a short walking tour of Mifflinburg to see some of Enoch Miller's buildings.



The Enoch Miller Building