

West Virginia Archives and History

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY November 5



Leon P. Miller of McDowell County became the first African-American judge elected to office in West Virginia on November 5, 1968.

<u>CSO:</u> ELA.8.1, SS.8.2

Investigate the Document: (Welch Daily News November 13, 1968)

- 1. Why was it "shocking" that Leon P. Miller won the election as a Republican in McDowell County? When was the last Republican elected to a major office at the time of Miller's victory in 1968? How many African Americans judges had been elected in West Virginia, prior to Miller?
- 2. Why was there the necessity for a write-in campaign?
- 3. Where did Miller practice law for two years prior to moving to Welch?
- 4. What former U.S. President appointed Leon Miller as the United States Attorney for the Virgin Islands?

Think Critically: Why do you think McDowell County was overwhelmingly Democratic at the time? Do you think Miller's candidacy was aided by the significant African American population that resided in McDowell County? What was the population of African Americans in the county, according to the most recent Census? <u>http://www.wvculture.org/history/teacherresources/censuspopulationrace.html</u>



Welch, West Virginia, Wednesday Evening, November 13, 1968

He

now

will qualify

Welch native and

'Miller, who has been serving

Although Morgan died before

lot for the November 5 general election. But a write-in cam-

paign for Miller and Hassan

was quietly organized and on

election day gummed stickers for both men were passed out

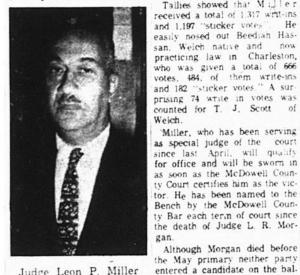
to voters.

April.

Miller Elected **Criminal** Judge

McDowell county. West Virginia's most southern area, today held the probable distinction of giving the state its first Negro judge.

An official canvess of the general election vote was com-? pleted here Tuesday afternoon, revealing that Welch Attorney Leon P. Miller has been elected Judge of the McDowell Criminal Court by a write-in vote. He is 69. Tallies showed that Miller



Judge Leon P. Miller

The new jurist is also the first Republican elected to a major office in this county since the early 30s

Local observers today pointed out that the write-in vote was a personal tribute to the new strong jurist who overcame party ties in overwhelmingly Democratic McDowell county.

A native of Knoxville, Tenn Judge Miller was born April 27, 1899 and was reared in Roanoke. Va. He attended school here before enrolling in A and T College at Greensboro, NC

The jurist received his law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1922 and practiced at Williamson for two years before coming to Welch in 1924.

He and the late Harry J Capehart, Sr., were partners in a successful law firm for manyears In 1954. President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed Miller as United States Attorney for the Virgin Islands. He held that post until 1962 when he returned to Welch to resume the practice of law.

During the Republican administrations of the late 20s. Judge Miller served as an assistant prosecuting attorney for the county from 1928 to 1932. He was married to the former Miss Mildred Foster of Greensboro N. C. They reside on Court Street.

Judge and Mrs. Miller are parents of three daughters, all of whom have distinguished themselves in public service Mrs Artrelle Wheatley of Caracas. Venezdela is a former (Continued On Page Two)

MILLER ELECTED

(Continued From Page Oue) worker for the Ford Foundation.

At the request of the government she gave up the post when her husband became head of the peace corps in Caracas.

Mrs. Jane Miller Johnson is presently employed by the Presbyterian Hospital of New York as a psychiatric social worker. The third daughter is Mrs. Lydia Patricia Miller Adams, of the Virgin Islands, a physical therapist in charge of the Island's crippled children's division.

The Millers also have five grandchildren. ł