

Home. She was awarded a Litt.D. by the University of N.C. in 1933 and was a leader in establishing Samarcond Manor for delinquent girls.

DR. ISAAC H. MILLER, JR.

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Dr. Isaac H. Miller, Jr. the youngest of two sons born to Professor Isaac H. Miller, Sr. (deceased) and Hattie Miller. Isaac was born September 26, 1920 in Jacksonville, Florida. His father was the chair of education at Livingstone College in 1929. Moore's Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Salisbury was the family church. He attended Monroe Street Elementary School and Price High School in Salisbury. He graduated from Livingstone College in 1938 with a B.S. degree. In 1948 Dr. Miller was awarded the M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin, and in 1951 he received the Ph.D. degree in Biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Miller was President of Bennett College, Greensboro, NC 1966-86; Associate Professor of Biochemistry, Meharry Medical College 1954-56; Assistant Professor of Chemistry, NC A & T State University 1950-54; visiting scientist, Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies; Panelist, National Science Foundation; Program on research participation for high school teachers; author of 15 research papers on the metabolism of carcinogenic chemicals and related topics.

Dr. Miller holds memberships: American Chemical Society; Botanical Society of America; American Association for the Advancement of Science; Association of Southeastern Biologists; American Association of University Professors; Society of the Sigma Xi; Gamma Alpha and Phi Sigma Honor Societies.

Dr. Miller received Lederle Medical Faculty Awards, Meharry Medical College 1957-60; Golden Apple outstanding teacher award, Meharry 1962-63.

He holds membership in the St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Greensboro, NC, Board member of the United Fund of Greensboro, and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

Dr. Miller and his wife, Effe have four sons, Isaac, Kevin, Eric, and Keith and one daughter, Kay.

Sources: *Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1977-1978*; *Peerless Laymen in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*; George Alexander Brooks, Sr., 1974.

—Harold O. Robinson

GUNFIGHT ON INNES STREET

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On the afternoon of December 31, 1930, one of the country's most notorious criminals, an escape artist who had escaped from a North Carolina prison as well as several others prisons in the past and had been on the loose for six months, met his match when he encountered Salisbury's then



One-armed bandit Otto Wood was killed in a gunfight by Police Chief Robert Lee Rankin on Dec. 31, 1930.

heard the rumor that the infamous one-armed bandit Otto Wood was in town. They had taken Chief Rankin's personal car (since all the patrol cars were on duty) and begun to drive around the heart of downtown Salisbury. On Innes Street Chief Rankin saw two men, one with his left hand in his pocket. He turned the car around, approached the strangers and asked Otto to show his left hand. Wood pulled out a .45 Smith and Wesson revolver, climbed into the back seat and ordered the officers to drive him and his companion to the railroad station. Chief Rankin, while pretending to fumble with the car keys, opened the car door, unholstered his pistol and dashed to the front of the car. The shoot-out began. Officer Kesler subdued Wood's travelling companion. When the gunfight was over, Otto Wood was dead with one of Chief Rankin's bullets in his head and another in his neck. Chief Rankin had only scratches from the broken glass of the car's windshield.

In this early depression year, Otto Wood's exciting fate brought many letters of congratulations to Chief Rankin and Officer Kesler from law officers around the state. The generous people of Salisbury donated money to pay for Wood's funeral since his family had none. The body of the outlaw was viewed by over 60,000 people at a Salisbury funeral home. *The Salisbury Evening Post* sold more than 15,000 extra copies of the issue headlining this event and it contributed a wreath to accompany Wood's body on his last trip home to Coaldale, West Virginia.

This information is taken from *The Salisbury Evening Post*, January 31, 1940, Volume 104, No. 31 and from *The State* magazine, Volume 38, No. 18, February 15, 1971, and No. 20, March 15, 1971.

—Christina Rankin Rowland

THE TOWN THAT LOVED THE CIRCUS

L107

This is the story of a very unique and unusual relationship that developed when Mr. Charley Sparks brought his "World Famous Sparks Circus" to a small southern town back in 1910.

I say it was a very unusual relationship because being a very old and proper town, Salisburians generally considered anyone whose family had not been a resident for at least two generations, to be a newcomer.

But Mr. Charley Sparks was indeed a very unique and unusual man and his circus had hardly finished unloading its cargo of wild animals, tents and gilded wagons before the citizens of Salisbury had opened their hearts and welcomed the circus people as friend and neighbors.

You might ask why Mr. Sparks selected Salisbury as a home for his circus. The weather was moderate; both east, west, north and south lines of the Southern Railroad crossed here and the large shops at Spencer were available to refurbish the circus train each season after its long journey across the country.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sparks became one of our most well known and beloved couples.

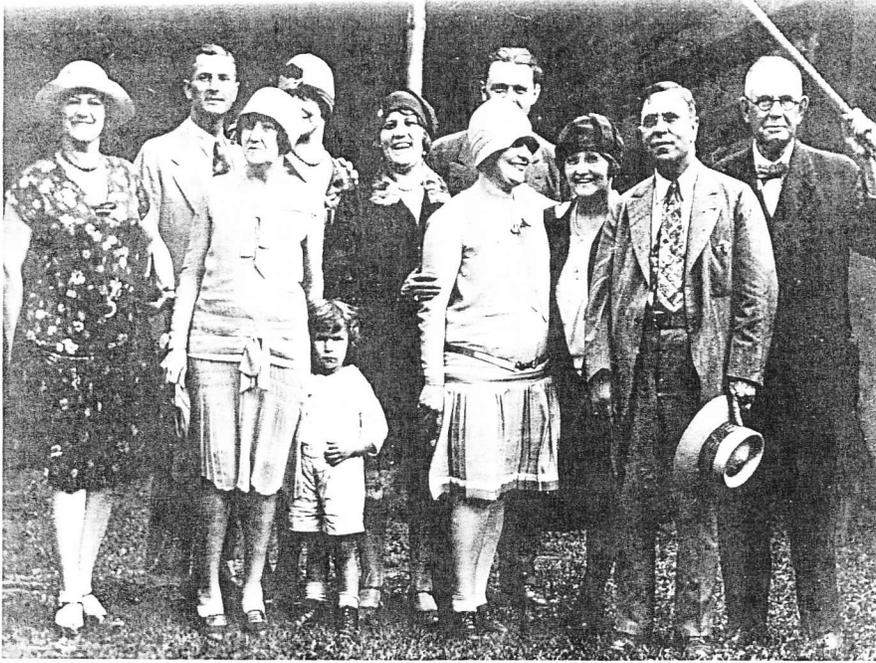
Born in Park City, Utah, in 1880, Charles Sparks, at the age of six years, was singing and dancing on the street corners to support his widowed mother and two sisters. Learning that she had T.B., which was always fatal in those days, Mrs. Sparks gave her young son, Charles, to Mr. John Wiseman, for adoption. Wiseman not only adopted Charles Sparks but adopted the name Sparks as well and became John Sparks, one of America's best known circusmen.

Charles Sparks and his father toured the country with minstrels, Uncle Tom Cabin shows, and later small circuses. Often they would have to sell a cornet or drum to have money for food or move their small show to the next town.

Mrs. Addie Sparks was a very petite lady but she assumed a very important part along side her husband in running the circus. She had charge of the cookhouse, made the costumes, helped with the parade and would often doctor a sick elephant.

The Sparks made their first home in Salisbury with Mr. and Mrs. D.L. Saylor on West Innes Street. In 1912, when the new Yadkin Hotel was completed, it became headquarters and home for the Sparks' executives. Later many of the show performers stayed at the Ford Hotel.

A circus consumes vast amounts of food, especially Sparks Circus, which enjoyed the reputation of being the best fed show in the country. Mr. M.L. Jackson, our local butcher, would bring in fresh meat by the wagon load for the circus staff and for the wild animals. Former Mayor Wiley Lash remembers as a boy being sent by his father to the circus grounds each day to take grocery orders and then to deliver them on his bicycle. Wiley recalled that the "Fat Lady" in the sideshow was



Family photograph of the Sparks Family — 1918 or 1919. First row, left to right: Unknown, Unknown, Clifton Sparks, Jr. (boy), Unknown, Unknown, Mrs. Charles (Addie) Sparks, Charles Sparks (with hat). Second row, left to right: Clifton Sparks, Mrs. Clifton Sparks, Charles Sparks, Unknown. Photo courtesy of Paul Bernhardt.



The largest elephant in captivity, "Big Mary" belonged to the Sparks Circus which wintered in Salisbury in the early 1900s. Young Robert V. Brawley sits atop Big Mary while his grandmother, Mrs. A.H. Boyden stands by. Big Mary killed a trainer in Erwin, Tennessee in 1916 and was hanged. Photo courtesy of *The Salisbury Post*.

Jim Jacobs, superintendent of circus stock animals, often visited the old Salisbury Hardware Company where he had Mr. Paul, or his son Leake, Bernhardt order special whips and harnesses. Jim, as did many of the circus people, spent much time in the hardware store, standing around the red hot pot belly stove, telling tales of

his travels. The Sparks, the Mayos and other members of the circus staff became well known in Salisbury. Mr. Jack Wallace, Murray Smith and Dave Oestreicher were among the circle of friends they enjoyed. Fritz Brunner, a German, the wild animal trainer, was often a guest in the Oestreicher home where German was spoken fluently. Mr. Walter Pete Murphy and Mr. Walter Woodson, Sr., were close friends and did much legal work for the Sparks.

During the winter months local citizens would visit the circus grounds to watch as craftsmen prepared the wagons and other equipment, to see the animals being trained and to hear Professor Wills play the giant steam calliope which could be heard for miles. Some lucky youngsters were even allowed to ride the elephants down to Grants Creek for water.

As winter ended, the circus prepared for its opening performance here. One year the Daughters of the Confederacy sponsored the opening day ticket sales with Miss Katherine Burt, Miss Daisy Brown and Miss Eleanor Ramsay receiving gold coins as an award for selling the most tickets.

Many local young men joined the circus. Jim Hodges, who spent his life on the sawdust trail with side shows; Cicero Shuping, who came home to operate the State Barber Shop; Mr. Sells of Cooleemee, a clown with Sparks; and Shep Pierce, the man who in later years climbed the Wallace Building, all left town aboard the circus train.

In 1916, however, one who did not leave aboard the circus train was the Sparks camel. Just before departing it was discovered she was pregnant. Arrangements were made for her care and the camel was left with friends in a small barn across

first, and only, camel ever born in Salisbury arrived, a thin spindly-legged furry creature.

Hundreds of local citizens went to the railroad to bid their friends goodbye and wish them a safe and prosperous journey as they headed north on their annual tour.

Mr. Charles Sparks died in 1949 in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

—Paul Leake Bernhardt

"THE WRECK OF THE OLD 97" L108

Fame has been brought to the town of Spencer because of the lines of a ballad which begins:

They gave him his orders in Monroe, Virginia,
Saying, "Steve, you're way behind time,
This is not 38, but it's Old 97
You must put her into Spencer on time."

The fast mail train known as the Old 97 was the pride of the Southern Railroad which handled the Washington to Atlanta portion of its run from New York to New Orleans. This hot shot train, which ran from 1902 until 1907, was given road priority over other trains and brought \$140,000 annually to the Southern. If mail was delayed, the Southern was penalized \$100—a lot of money in those days; thus the crew would strive to make sure the train reached its destination on time.

The wreck about which the ballad was written occurred on Sunday, September 27, 1903. The train was an hour late leaving Washington, D.C. because of a delay in loading mail and express. Engineer Joseph A. "Steve" Broady boarded the train in Monroe. He was from Saltville, Virginia, but had a brother who lived in Spencer. Other crew members that day included Conductor Thomas Blair from Spencer; S.J. Moody, flagman from Raleigh; and A.G. Clapp, fireman from Greensboro. W.A. Aaron of Spencer was to have been baggage master, but he was called for an earlier train. So there would be plenty of steam, there was a second fireman, Robert Dodge. In addition to the train crew there were twelve postal clerks, an express messenger, and a safelocker. The safelocker's job was to unlock the safe to remove or add valuables; then he would lock the safe and get off the train. This procedure was a safeguard against robbery. Determined to make up as much time as possible, Broady left so quickly that safelocker, Wentworth Armistead, didn't have time to get off the train. Engineer Broady was relatively new to the run, and the stretch coming down White Oak Mountain into North Danville approaching Stillhouse Trestle was the most dangerous part of the line between Washington and Atlanta. Stillhouse Trestle was a crescent-shaped wooden structure over Cherrystone Creek. Just as the engine reached the trestle, the flanges let go of the rails, and the entire train left the tracks, traveled a hundred feet through the air and plunged seventy-five feet into the bed of the creek. The engine, 1102, was buried in the mud; the express car, the baggage car, and