

# John Lawrence Milton

## Second Rector of Christ Church, Rawdon ©

This essay is sourced mainly from newspaper letters and announcements that were researched and translated, if needed, by Marc Dixon [marcdixon@videotron.ca](mailto:marcdixon@videotron.ca) for *UP TO RAWDON* and from research by the author.

Daniel B. Parkinson

### Introduction

John Lawrence Milton was born in the United States of America c. 1793, a date based on his age at death. He may have been younger because the 1851 English census report suggested birth in 1801, as did Australian immigration records. The Benevolent Asylum death report should be the more likely, but one cannot be sure. Australian records name his parents as Archibald and Martha. That he was an American is supported by the resolutions published by the Protestant Episcopalian inhabitants of Rawdon who vouched that, before he was ordained, Mr. Milton took “the necessary oaths” to qualify as a loyal British subject (*Montreal Gazette*, 12 February 1835). The 1851 English Census confirmed that he was a British citizen born in the USA. The Australian statement that he was born in England is clearly an assumption made by friends at the Asylum.

Initially, a birthplace was suggested from his connections to the city of Charleston, South Carolina, where he lived in the 1820s. A notice that follows (below) suggests it is possible that he was born in Greenville, Tennessee, or near that city. I am uncomfortable with these guesses and wonder if he and his father came from New England; however, we have nothing concrete, only instinct, to support that theory. He arrived in Rawdon as ‘an American southerner’ and, living at Terrebonne in 1831, he was described as from South Carolina.

Details in the chronology suggest that John Lawrence Milton was a man of advanced thinking in matters of science, education (especially for women), public policy, and services for the underprivileged and the abused. As an American, Milton was doubtlessly guided by the ideals and practices of the early republic. It would seem inevitable that he would not fit easily into a system that was paternalistic and authoritarian. The Rawdon parish had been led by J. E. Burton, a priest from the Church of Ireland, a man of old-fashioned and traditional ways, but also a man of science. Burton had struggled to unify the various religious denominations and leanings of his parishioners.

It is doubtful that the parishioners were aware of Milton’s background in the Presbyterian church; if they had been, it would surely have raised eyebrows. I have written about the attempt to establish a Presbyterian presence at Rawdon in [Burton’s Church](#), *An Irony of Rawdon History – did it become Presbyterian?* At Rawdon, John Jefferies and others were vocal in protesting that the Clergy Reserve land went only to the Church of England and the policy excluded Presbyterians. Did Milton have a position on this government policy? He must have known that only the Established Church (Anglican) and the Roman Catholic Church were fully recognized in Lower Canada. One suspects Jefferies’ hand was possibly behind some of the views expressed in *The Vindicator*. However, Milton wished all

denominations to be represented in the proposal for a classical school at Rawdon in 1834 and Jefferies was on the school committee that resulted.

It appears that John Lawrence Milton was not patient with those who differed with his opinion or with those who misunderstood his purpose. He appears to have believed wholly in the value of Morison's pills initially, attracted by the philanthropic ideals of the founder, James Morison and his British College of Health.<sup>1</sup> Morison and his pills were in time dismissed as quackery.

Milton was a man of high aspirations. Throughout his life on three continents, he stood by his vision of truth and what was required by his Christian faith in the Gospel.

### Early days in America

**1825:** The Rev. Mr. M'Dowall announced the imminent arrival in Charleston, for the summer, of a "young gentleman" from Greenville College, Tennessee, "willing to instruct a private family". M'Dowall would provide details and references immediately to inquiries at "this office". Although Milton is not mentioned in this notice, subsequent ones suggest "the young gentleman" could be John Lawrence Milton. *Charleston Daily Courier* (31 May 1825).

Several clergymen were mentioned in the newspaper notices inserted by Milton when he was in Charleston – William A. M'Dowall, Arthur Buist and Benjamin M. Palmer, all prominent Presbyterian churchmen in that city. Greenville College, chartered in 1794, is incorporated with Tusculum University, a private Presbyterian university.

Milton advertised his services as a tutor for young ladies. A lengthy insert in the *Charleston Daily Courier* (**16 January 1826**) mentions English Literature and the various areas of study under the term "belle

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<sup>1</sup> James Morison began in 1825 to assert the importance of the blood to health; he believed that all diseases were caused by its impurity and urged the purging of it with his own specially developed Vegetable Pill (Morison's pills). Originally meant to be given away, Morison found that no-one appreciated them when free and began selling through specially appointed agents. He subsequently built the British College of Health to promote the product in partnership with Thomas Moat. The grandiose name was "one of the cleverest things he ever did...by taking on a sort of corporate philanthropic existence he removed himself from the category of a mere commercial exploiter of a proprietary medicine." In the early 1830s, his annual turnover in Britain was thought to be around £100,000. He conducted a related campaign against orthodox doctors. The pills were a resolutely non-medical, commercial product; the factory name suggested medical education associated with a professional-sounding society. After a series of deaths attributed to overdoses of his pills, Morison left England in 1834 for Paris. The College thrived again from 1840 to 1849. It paid £115,000 and had sold 828,000,000 pills; another 1.5 million had been distributed to the poor. (John Malcolm Bulloch, *The Centenary of James Morison the "Hygeist"*, 1925) from [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/british\\_college\\_of\\_health.htm](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/british_college_of_health.htm)

Morrison's Pills may have acted, in early days, as a mild multivitamin dietary supplement for the disadvantaged. Despite the well-reasoned arguments of some 'alternative health' practitioners against the medical establishment, the pills became overhyped as a miracle remedy. It was an age of quack cures and questionable medical treatments, and Morison's played a role in changing and expanding thought about medical treatment and the options available to the public.

*lettres*". The host of subjects included grammar, geography with globes, book-keeping, and languages. The Rev. Mr. William M'Dowall was one of two men named to inquire of for terms or references.

In an advertisement placed in the *Charleston Mercury* on **8 December 1826**, Milton proposed opening an evening school for young gentlemen in "pleasant apartments" at 73 Broad Street, Charleston, on **1 January 1827**. Lessons in English Grammar, Geography, and "such of the *Belles Lettres* as the learner may feel disposed to pursue." Three gentlemen are named who "approve the proposition and recommend it to the youth of the city". Classes could begin before the holydays [sic] if desired. Private lessons were possible during the day.

Milton appears to have established himself with several private students and, in the *Charleston Daily Courier* of **27 May 1828**, offers his services at the summer retreat on Sullivan's Island for private tuition. His rate is based on the number of students in the class. He proposes a series of lectures on a variety of topics. Parents are invited to contact the subscriber at the Planters' Hotel in Charleston or the Island. Because he has been engaged and still is by respectable Charleston families, he deems it unnecessary to trouble his friends again for references. The Planters' Inn in present day Charleston dates from 1803.

**1828-1830:** The *Charleston Mercury* published a number of items by or concerning John Lawrence Milton relating to his career as a teacher in Charleston that are summarized here.

**6 Jul 1828:** Milton announced that he will be in charge at the English and Classical Seminary for Young Ladies and Gentlemen, succeeding Mr. Myer M. Cohen (who opened a Law Office the next month). He remarks that the "amiable lady" ... "will still continue her assistance in the Female department." On 21 July 1828, Milton informed his readers that after the current quarter, the Seminary would take only female pupils and on 30 September 1828 announced an ambitious and comprehensive course of studies with public examinations. On 17 December 1828, he changed the name to the Charleston Institute for Young Ladies. "Rude Boys" disrupted the annual public examination on **11 December 1829**; their names were known to Milton, but they would not be mentioned out of regard for their parents "who are respectable". Milton's income was dependent on the good will of "respectable" families. The Charleston Female Seminary, at 104 Meeting Street "opposite the Circular [Congregational] Church", announced it was to open 4 January **1830** and classes resumed on the seventh. This was not Milton's Institute, which apparently folded, but it had an agenda similar to Milton's. The principal teacher was "Miss Livinia [sic Lavinia] Brainerd. One must assume that the two teachers were well acquainted. Did Miss Brainerd put Milton out of business or was he moving on from the hard work of organizing and operating a school?

His 234 King Street address in Charleston was for rent by January 29th, 1830. It appears he closed his school and left, rather abruptly.

## To the Northern United States

An undated letter by J. L. Milton in the *New York Herald* was republished in the *Charleston Mercury* on **3 July 1830** concerning his experience with dyspepsia. The letter is of great import to this biography because it places Milton in New York City early in 1830, probably after leaving Charleston in **January 1830**. Next he is lecturing in Burlington, Vermont, in **October** and **November 1830** before we find him in Montreal. He gives insight into his disposition, in this self-assessment of his health issues, in New York. The letter suggests a reason for his later interest in alternative medicine and his connection to Morison – see footnote one, above.

“Having been for a series of years miserably afflicted with [dyspepsia] paralysing my mental energies, enervating my physical functions, and setting down upon my whole being, like some deadly incubus, proteus in its forms and terrific in its effects, eluding or resisting the force of all medicines and continuing me a prey to a most tormenting train of its own ill-begotten attendants, peevishness, hypochondria, nervous and hepatic [sic hepatic] affections, rendering me unhappy in myself and unfrequently a source of uneasiness to others.” He was recommended to a man at Wall and Broad Streets, New York City, and though sceptical at first, his prescriptions restored Milton’s “digestive organs and mental energies” and “I believe the remedy a safe, philosophical and effectual one.” He was “restored to health” and old acquaintances were greatly surprised at his improvement. Oliver Halsted published in 1830 *A Full and Accurate Account of the New Method of Curing Dyspepsia, Discovered and Practised, With Some Observations on Diseases of the Digestive Organs*. Copies of this book can be found for sale online.

An announcement in the Burlington, Vermont, *Sentinel and Democrat*, **22 Oct 1830**: Solar Microscope, Mr. J. L. Milton “does himself the honour of announcing...that for a few subsequent days he will exhibit the GRAND SOLAR MICROSCOPE, a truly philosophical instrument, of astonishing magnifying powers”. Admittance was 25 cents with a considerable deduction for “families and schools”. The gentlemen of the Faculty of the College and the Clergy are most respectfully invited to attend.” It was an apparatus for projecting upon a screen, by means of sunlight, an enlarged view of any object — essentially the same as the combination of lenses used in the magic lantern taken in conjunction with a heliostat. Milton lectured with one in Montreal (see February 22, 1833). He was given the generous gift of a telescope in 1852 – see following.

Milton refers to the faculty of the University of Vermont that was founded at Burlington in 1794 and he appealed to the clergy and academics to attend. But why was he lecturing in that city? <sup>2</sup>

**5 November 1830**: From an insert in the *Burlington Sentinel and Democrat*, Milton was in Burlington to lecture at Capt. Thomas’ Hall on **10 November 1830**. His topic was SOULS and FUTURE EXISTENCE of BRUTE CREATION, a talk he was to give soon in Montreal.

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<sup>2</sup> I assumed initially that Milton was situated in Montreal and that the Vermont lecture was an excursion for him. When there were two lectures in Burlington about three weeks apart and a few months after he was in New York City, it occurred to me that he was only on his way to Montreal. Although the distance between the cities is less than 100 miles (153 km), the trip by land, river, and lake was not an easy one and so Burlington could have been a stop on his journey from New York City. The Hudson River with the canal to Lake Champlain route had opened in 1823. In 1830, there was a stage line leaving three days a week from Montreal to St. Johns (Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu) and to Burlington on the second day. It intersected at Burlington with the “Boston, Albany, and Whitehall stages and the steamboats on their passage through the lake”.

The reason to stop in Burlington is a theory based on the assumption that his professional association with Lavinia Brainerd was also a friendship. We do not know why he chose to go to Montreal, but he may have shared this purpose with her when he closed his Institute for Young Ladies, and she may have suggested that he might give a lecture at Burlington to break his journey because the president of the university (from 1826 to 1833), was her first cousin, the Reverend James Marsh, “a not-so-orthodox, rational Congregationalist who believed in an integrated organic universe based on spiritual freedom” (UVM bio).

This footnote, although consisting of facts, expresses theories that are the author’s and are not factual. Likewise, was Milton’s purpose to start a school and was he seeking ordination in the Protestant Episcopal Church of Lower Canada, a by-product of an association he appears to have formed with Bishop Stewart?

## To Canada

An insertion in the *Montreal Gazette* (**27 January 1831**): Mr. J. Lawrence Milton was to lecture on this date on the SOULS and FUTURE EXISTENCE of BRUTE CREATION at 7 p.m. (doors open at half past six) at the British and Canadian Schoolhouse. Proofs drawn from Scripture, Reason, Analogy, and the Perfections of our Common Creator “all in accordance with the most pious feelings.” Admittance: 2s 6d children 1s. 3d. Music by a Select Band. Tickets were available various bookstores.

An insertion from the *Montreal Gazette* (**3 February 1831**) for a second lecture by Mr. Milton: the topic was the Importance of Female Education — “a theme to which Mr. M has devoted much attention ... the education of youth”. It was to be at 7 p.m. on the fourth of February at the Mechanic’s Institution, next to the post office. Tickets at the door were fifteen pence and children half that amount. “The terms of admission may preclude no person who desires to attend.” It was postponed due to inclement weather and re-scheduled for the 11<sup>th</sup>. On **February 22, 1831** “in consequence of an engagement in the country” the series was discontinued indefinitely, but with the intention to resume in “some subsequent period, with appropriate apparatus”.

**26 October 1831**: Terrebonne, Quebec Census, signed by J. L. Prevost, enumerator (Library and Archives Canada): John Lawrence Milton was recorded at the village of Terrebonne by the francophone enumerator as *maître d’école*; his name was misread as Mettea [sic]. He was listed as Anglican and lived beside an *aubergiste* (innkeeper). He lived near the households of the former seigneur, the Honourable Roderick McKenzie, who was a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and his son (squire) John McKenzie. The McKenzie children of both families were baptized Roman Catholics, but schools were based neither on religion nor language at this date. There were few English language households in the seigneurie of Terrebonne; Mr. Burton, the rector of Christ Church parish, which included Terrebonne, had baptized two children from the seigneurie in 1831. According to statistics published in an *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada*, there were 20 paying pupils in Milton’s school.

We learn something of Milton and his Terrebonne school from François-Xavier Valade, a teacher and contemporary who had a school there 1829-1834 before and after Milton and says Milton arrived in August 1831.<sup>3</sup> Milton’s endeavour was a threat to Valade’s ‘modest’ school, drawing off most of the English and a few of the ‘Canadian’ students, and this coloured his point of view. His journal is in somewhat idiosyncratic French, and it is not easy to get the context; there are occasional English phrases. He is ironic about the government’s handling of education and somewhat sarcastic and bitter about Milton. He, like Milton, was passionate in his beliefs and described the events around him with observations on Nature, Society, and Politics. Political dissent was boiling up and his memoir is that of an eyewitness to the era. A new school act was being implemented defining school districts and limiting the amount of funds for schools and teachers. That there were more teachers than schools may have encouraged Milton toward seeking ordination.

Milton’s was a private school, and we know that it was not supported by the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning, as the Forks school at Rawdon was. Valade mentions that anyone with connections to the ‘English or Scottish Gentlemen’ could make a comfortable life for themselves, as compared to his own meagre subsistence wages. This may be a reference to Milton’s relationship to the seigneur Roderick McKenzie, in whose manor his school was situated. McKenzie would lose the

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<sup>3</sup> BAC-LAC: Fonds François-Xavier Valade, Reference: R6317-0-7-F, MG24-K35

seigneurie in 1832 and this, and cholera, perhaps contributed to the close of Milton's school, which Valade says was not progressing and became weak in numbers. He appears to accuse Milton of using corporal punishment on his students, like the British use on their soldiers.

Milton is described as educated but eccentric, 'the man with the big beard, solitary, taciturn and morose' and shunned by polite society. His view of Milton may be a little slanted, but it fits the man we see at Rawdon, England, and Australia.

Valade concludes his remarks on Milton, in retrospect, with a few bizarre comments that mock Milton for having deserted teaching to don the "pelisse noire" (cassock); he is 'failing upwards,' encouraged by the English bishop, although some wicked people say he did it 'for the sake of his purse.' The 'eccentric Milton,' as a priest 'will one day achieve martyrdom like Henry VIII, his daughter Elisabeth [sic], and the Protector Cromwell.'

Milton was accepted as an Ordinary Member of the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal at the **6 December 1831** meeting as a teacher residing in Terrebonne and had been proposed in **July 1831** soon after arriving in Canada via New York City and Burlington, Vermont. (The Montreal Institute was founded in 1828 to provide opportunities for education to artisans, craftsmen, and shopkeepers who were employers. Milton would have been aware of the similar goals of the Apprentices' Library Society in Charleston and New York. The Montreal Institute may have supported or assisted Milton with his public lectures; their Archives are at Atwater Library and Computer Centre in Montreal.)

**24 March 1833:** Milton was a deacon when ordained as an Episcopal priest; presumably this took place in Montreal, when he swore the oath of loyalty to the Crown. He declared he was ordained on this date at his insolvency trial in Southampton, England in 1843 – see following. Before this date, he had lectured in Montreal as Mr. Milton. The Quebec Ecclesiastical Almanac names the Rev. J. L. Milton as assistant under the Reverend G. Salmon in East and West Shefford, Quebec, on 25 March 1833 and notes that Milton was previously a deacon. In a letter to the bishop 9 December 1834, he is sorry, not for his own sake, but for the "church in this place and in Kildare and ... in L'Assomption, Terrebonne, Kilkenny that your Lordship does not yet see fit to put me in priest's orders".

On **28 September 1833**, the *Montreal Gazette* reported that, under the guidance of the Rev. G. Salmon and Rev. J. Milton, Sunday schools in the Township of Shefford were flourishing, "a proof of the progress of education and moral improvement" in that section of Lower Canada.

On **25 February 1834**, the *Montreal Gazette* reported that a meeting had been held at the Court House on the previous day to appoint delegates to attend a meeting of Temperance societies of the province in Montreal on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The Anglican bishop was in the chair and the Reverend Mr. Milton of Shefford had opened the business.

**2 April 1834:** Milton was a clerk signing for Bishop Charles James Stewart, releasing clergy reserves in Sherrington to the Crown (<https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=e008736893&op=img>). This must have been an interim position before Rawdon, which had been open for almost a year, since May 1833; but perhaps Stewart, who had ill health, was not ready to spare him until July 1. It confirms that Milton had a fairly close relationship with his bishop, which we can understand from his letter to him on 9 December. From reading his biography, Stewart's ideals and ambitions about schools and social welfare were such that Milton may have looked on him as a mentor.

In the *Montreal Gazette* **8 June 1834**, the Reverend J. L. Milton of Shefford and other individuals were elected corresponding members of the Natural History Society.

From **July to December 1834**, J. L. Milton was the incumbent at Christ Church, Rawdon, Lower Canada. He assumed his duties as rector of the large area of this parish and his first baptisms there were recorded on **6 July 1834**. His name appears in the Minute Book chairing Vestry in the months following. He went there as a missionary, with the support of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, a Church of England missionary organization, as did his predecessor James Edward Burton.

**6 December 1834:** Milton's proposal to "build the church himself and to distribute the advantages of the work amongst the parishioners to the best of his judgment" was accepted by Vestry, meaning he was the chief contractor. The layout and design of the church came from the proposal of Major Robert Bagnall, who had been chairing the building committee.

A public notice was posted in Rawdon inviting those interested in "the cause of education" to attend at the parsonage on the 17<sup>th</sup> to pass resolutions in favour of establishing "an elementary and a classical school combined". Also "for the purpose of giving a name to the village." This became a complicated and troubling time for Milton and his Vestry. *Christ Church Vestry Minutes, 1834-1836* contains an account of an attack on his character, on December 9, by Thomas Griffith, who was treasurer of Vestry and the highest-ranking representative of the Crown in the Township, and the vitriolic letters that appeared in *The Vindicator and Canadian Advertiser* in January 1835.

On **16 December 1834**, with Vestrymen William Long and Thomas W. Cartwright as witnesses, J. L. Milton entered "upon the Glebe Lot 16 of the 6th Range, Rawdon Township, and by breaking a twig upon said land and by making a declaration before witnesses at the time I have this day taken possession of said land on behalf of the church". He stated this in a letter to The Archdeacon of Quebec (LAC C-2548 Vol,143, Page: 70023-70037). The lot was patented in Milton's name on 3 January 1835 and Village Lots 1 and 2 of Village Range 3 were added as Clergy Reserve and purchased by the Church in the name of J. L. Milton with Letters Patent issued October 1838 engrossed and dated 10 December 1839.<sup>4</sup>

At the request of Vestry, Milton had been writing to the bishop concerning issues related to building the parsonage house and the proposed village church, and about canvassing in the township and in the three cities of Lower Canada. On **9 December 1834**, before the Vestry affair had blown up, he wrote to thank Bishop Stewart for aid "from a certain fund"<sup>5</sup> that was at his disposal. The issue stemming from Vestry was about establishing a classical school in the village, for which Milton seemed qualified, and a controversial proposal to name the village Charleston, for Bishop Charles Stewart. The bishop wanted him to begin soliciting in Montreal in the new year and Milton reminded him it would be difficult then because "your Lordship [has permitted] my congé to commence."

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<sup>4</sup> The use of Milton's name on documents after he left the community is confusing. A brieflet published in *Le Télégraphe* (3 May 1837) advises that Rev. J. L. Milton on 31 December 1836 had paid 4 pounds as an Installment towards acquiring Lots 1 & 2 of the Village Third Range, which was designated as Crown Reserve. This was done either by Rawdon Vestry or the Church authorities in Milton's name, because he was the holder of the patent. He was no longer the rector and his location in 1836, although church authorities may have been aware of it, is not known to us.

<sup>5</sup> [https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_h2557/55](https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_h2557/55)

A letter from Thomas Griffith about the affair was published in *The Vindicator* **January 13, 1835** and on **January 15**, Milton responded. Considering Griffith's position as the representative of the Crown in the Township, with government and militia and his seat in Christ Church Vestry, Milton was very outspoken. He calls Griffith's letter one of "falsehood and misrepresentation". "He has unquestionably brought himself into a pitiable condition ... by his suicidal conduct." Milton implies he has brought "the piercing rays of Gospel light...to Satan's kingdom." The letters are summarized in the Vestry story referred to above.

**25 December 1834:** At the final full Vestry, the secretary is to advise the Lord Bishop of their "gratitude towards the erection of our church and for sending a minister to labour so eminently qualified the arduous duties of the mission".

**31 December 1834:** Milton performed his last baptisms at Rawdon. In January 1835, they were administered by the Reverend Archdeacon George Jehoshaphat Mountain, Archdeacon of Lower Canada. Mountain left for England in August 1835, where he raised funds for Stewart's church building. In 1836, while on this tour, he was raised to Bishop of Montreal, Quebec, and responsible for Lower Canada.

Milton's leave commenced; he may have done some 'fund raising' but he did not return to Rawdon. Church records do not explain. He had been rector for only six months. Because his name is attached to the many documents associated with the acquisition of land for the church and parsonage, it appears he was there for more than that time. See footnote 4.

**2 February 1835:** The "Protestant Episcopalian inhabitants of Rawdon" in a letter published in the *Montreal Gazette* confirmed that their "respect and esteem for the Reverend J. L. Milton remains unaltered" and they addressed the "dissension" and "harsh feeling" in the township with the aim of restoring the "peace and harmony of society".

**11 May 1836:** From the Select Vestry minutes is this curious account, that the balance of £2 / 12 / 11 be allowed to Robert Bagnall for work done to parsonage road and £5 / 0 / 0 for the stove furnished pursuant to contact with the Revd. J. Milton and that this money be paid him as soon as it can possibly be collected on the outstanding subscriptions still due.

## **Life in Southampton and other parts of England**

**October 1841** "Baptism of a Clergyman — The Reverend J. L. Milton, a clergyman of the Church of England who was a missionary in Canada was baptized at the Baptist chapel on Sunday last in East-street Southampton by the Rev. Dr. B. H. Draper with several other persons. ... The reverend neophyte preached at the same chapel in the evening and stated the reason which had induced him to change his religious opinions." *Cambridge Independent Press* Saturday, **16 October 1841**.

**1842:** Marriage to Emma, daughter of Joseph Tompkins of Broughton, Hants, by the Rev. Dr. B. H. Draper at the Baptist Chapel, East Street, Southampton *The Hampshire Advertiser* (Southampton) **4 June 1842**. Tompkins was a noted writer of hymns and a preacher at Southampton.

Previously, in **April 1842**, Milton had posted a notice in *The Hampshire Advertiser* that the pastor of Zion Church “was in no way responsible for any of my private or public proceedings in the ministry”. He had used “his Bethel” but was not employed by him nor was he responsible for my “sentiments or measures”. The pastor, James Crabb, a former Wesleyan, had established a seamen's mission and built Zion Chapel in 1823. Through his efforts among the disadvantaged, the first shelter for prostitutes was established and the Female Penitentiary in 1827. Known as the ‘Sailors’ Chaplain,’ he conducted services aboard P & O ships in the port. He is also remembered for his work with “gypsies” [sic Romany people].

In **July 1842**, Milton was holding weekly services, three times on Sundays and on Tuesday and Friday evenings, with communion using unfermented wine (not tea and coffee “as slanderously reported”) every Sabbath, for seamen and all others. The venue was Oberlin House in St. Mary’s, an inner-city area of Southampton named for the parish, which dated from the seventh century. Evangelizing and open air would continue as heretofore. The Bethel Union (Sailors’ Society) was a seaman’s missionary organisation whose flag was used to indicate a church service was in progress; it was founded by George Charles Smith, 1782-1863. A strong believer in temperance, his work included the founding of “asylums” in Britain for destitute sailors and orphans of merchant seamen. Milton’s work in Australia seems to have stemmed from this movement. *The Hampshire Advertiser* (Southampton 23 Jul 1842)

In **November 1842**, at Oberlin House Milton lectured on “Medical Science and Legitimate Practice”. He was chaplain and corresponding secretary of the “National Sailors’ Home and Evangelizing Society” at Southampton and “general agent” to the British College of Health (Morison’s pills). (*The Hampshire Advertiser*, Southampton, 24 December 1842).

John Lawrence Milton was to appear at Southampton Court House on **15 August 1843** as an insolvent debtor. He was “formerly of East and West Canada, [and] a missionary of the established Church, afterwards of the United States of America,” from *The Hampshire Advertiser* of 22 Jul 1843. The notice includes a list of twenty addresses in England including Southampton and France, where he was doing clerical or occasional clerical duty or “procuring subscribers to a work about to be published by me,” a tutor and a classical teacher.<sup>6</sup>

Milton was mocked in an article called ‘The Insolvent Martyr!!’ where he is described as a “Rehabite, wearing most formidable moustaches” at his trial. He declined to be sworn as a Christian minister because Christ says, “Swear not at all.” Despite being ordained in the Church of England, he said he did

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<sup>6</sup> We are unable to confirm when Milton was in Canada West. Perhaps his two months’ leave in early 1834 included a fund-raising tour in Lower and Upper Canada, either as a companion to the bishop or on his own directed by him. We know that Stewart often travelled with a younger companion clergyman and was in failing health. The Reverend Robert Cartwright, who was a ward of John Strachan and would succeed Bishop Mountain, sometimes accompanied Stewart.

The addresses in France one imagines could be linked to Milton’s connections to the SPG Anglican missions abroad, to Morrison’s pills or other health related concerns, and to his developing philanthropy for the poor working classes. There seems to have been an underlying logic and that his travels were not random.

not belong to any particular denomination, only that of Christ, but he was certainly separate from the Church of England. He was told that if he were not a “separatist,” as were Quakers and Moravians, he could not decline to swear. It appears therefore that he went to prison, at least temporarily, until he paid his £13 debt. He rejoiced at the close of the hearing because he had “this opportunity of bearing this testimony to the truth” whatever the outcome. He then apparently said "ritumti" which in numerology means "Search Ends When Sharing Starts". *The Hampshire Advertiser* (Southampton) **19 August 1843**.

**1845:** John L. Milton of Southampton attended a meeting at Birmingham about the “Medical Liberty of the Subject” and he proposed that in the current system, medical diplomas and licences provided no security to the public of their capability to cure and are in many respects injurious to the public because they are unfavourable to discoveries in science. His was one of seven proposals made by Friends of the Hygeian [sic] Cause. The meeting included presentations by John Morison (1770-1840) of Morison’s Pills (Hygeian Vegetable Universal Medicine) of the British College of Health and others in reaction to restrictions proposed by doctors to prevent “persons treating their diseases as they think proper” (*Birmingham Gazette* 24 November 1845). He thought of himself as doctor and affected the title, especially in Australia.

**1851:** Census Parish of Sculcoates, Kingston-upon-Hull, Yorkshire John L. Milton, 50, “clergyman seceding from the Established Church”, born United States of America (but is noted as a British subject). He and his wife Emma, 40, born at Caldecote, Berkshire, England, were lodgers in the home of a woman and her nephew.

## Melbourne, Australia

**1852:** J.S. [sic] Milton, aged 50, and Emma Milton, 45, arrived at Port Phillip as unassisted passengers on the *Lady Eveline*, according to the New South Wales passenger and immigration records.<sup>7</sup> (Victoria had separated from New South Wales on 1 July 1851.) *Lady Eveline* was a barque (sailing ship of three or more masts) from Liverpool, burthen 876 tons, James McClellan, master.

Milton had published “A card to the Christian public” in *The Hull News* (Hull, England **5 June 1852**) and announced changes in his travel plans as he would now sail from the East India docks on June 25, with his wife, as Chaplain and Librarian on the *Lady Eveline*. He and his “devoted partner” are going “in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ” as “the promotion of the Gospel is the one great work before them,” their efforts with the poor and “without salary are well known.” He begs support of their venture: “The tangible sympathy of Christians will be most acceptable” and he thanks those who have responded to a previous circular with books, money, and useful articles — in particular William White Jr., the owner of the ship, for his gift of a “valuable telescope” to “ponder the stars”. Signed John L. Milton V.D.M. and M.D. [Milton assumed the M.D. title, in his association with the British College of Health, and seems to have cast off the Church of England; he uses V.D.M. (verbi divini minister or Minister of the Divine Word) instead.]

Around the time the *Lady Eveline* would have left for Australia, a paid advertisement appeared in the *London Daily News* (**23 Jun 1852**, London). It stated that the Hygeian System is highly esteemed in

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<sup>7</sup> <https://prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/explore-topic/passenger-records-and-immigration> and <http://marinersandships.com.au/1851/05/038lad.htm>

Australia. An agent of the British College of Health “at the diggings” had made a good stroke of business selling Morison’s medicine at a shilling a pill” and “the demand far exceeded the supply”. The competition for the pills was as much as there was for gold. Hygeism only demands “a clear stage” and all countries will be free of “medical monopoly and tyranny”. [The agent of the British College of Health in Melbourne 1855 was Mr. A. Charlwood.]

The first Australian gold rush “started at Clunes, Victoria, in 1851, and soon towns were being established alongside the goldfields there. By 1860, there were 100,000 diggers on the Victorian fields.” (Wikipedia). Milton would have been there at the height of it and throughout the political revolution in Melbourne that it instigated.

In 1852, W. C. Moat (Morrison's former partner) began making his own version of the pills after a lengthy legal battle over trademark and recipe. The combined forces of competition from Moat in England and the lure of Australian gold may have motivated Milton to emigrate, whether for practical or philanthropic reasons.

**20 August 1853:** A meeting of the Britain American Association was held in Melbourne, as reported in the *Melbourne Argus* and the story was reposted in the *Semi-Weekly Spectator* (Hamilton, ON, 3 December 1853). A colonists’ association was being formed in Victoria to support and facilitate intercourse of the influx of persons from the British American possessions who had begun to arrive since the discovery of gold. Officers and a standing committee were elected and Rev. J. Milton D.D. & M.D. [sic] was named as Chaplain; however, another man was named as their physician. This places him in society in Australia for the first time to our knowledge.

**1854:** John L. Milton V.D.M. & M.D, 138 Flinders Lane East, published a lengthy mission statement and appeal: “Preach the Gospel to Every Creature,” “Do Good to All Men,” “The Time is Short”. He adds that printed reports of the progress of the work [are] periodically sent to contributors (*The Age*, Melbourne 21 October 1854).

**1855:** On 29 August 1855, Milton responded to newspaper articles about the Collingwood Philanthropic Society and his letter was published in *The Age* (Melbourne 31 August 1855). We learn that, as a resident of Melbourne, he was embroiled in a conflict over the disbursement of a charitable fund for the needy and feels that Melbourne people had contributed to the fund and were therefore deserving of a portion. His tone in defending himself is unreservedly outspoken – somehow this is not surprising and is representative of his character. He refers to himself as “Dr. Milton” in this letter.

**10 July 1856:** “Phrenology”, a letter to the Editor, from John L. Milton: He corrected the journalist on statements attributed to him at Professor Sohier’s lecture to the Mechanics’ Institute the previous week. Milton was in fact “converted to the belief that Phrenology was not unchristian”. His letter seems typical of Milton’s touchy semantics of expression. He was acquainted with this “highly accomplished scholar” and moved a vote of thanks for the lecture. He concludes: “Let single minded truth obtain the wide world o’er, and systems based in error Fail.” The editor did apologize for the reporter’s humour in the story and for any possible offence to Sohier by *The Age*, which merely gave publicity to a public discussion of Phrenology and “does not take a stand.” *The Age* (Melbourne 10 July 1856).

Milton was enumerated as a "gentleman" living in a house, on the **1856** Melbourne Electoral Roll.

**27 January 1857:** The Melbourne City Court Missionary and Female Home Society: “A matron wanted immediately . . . indispensable qualifications [were] Evangelical Christianity, decided teetotalism, aptitude for teaching, knowledge of the duties of office and a disposition to perform them *con amore*, and a heart constrained by the love of Christ to labor for the present good and eternal salvation of the perishing”. Application at the Mission House 77 Spring Street to John L. Milton, Managing Director. (*The Age*, Melbourne 27 January 1857).

**1857:** Mrs. Emma Milton died on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July at the female reformatory, 77 Spring Street, Melbourne, wife of the Rev. Dr. Milton “after four weeks of severe illness”. She departed as she lived “looking into Jesus” (*The Age*, Melbourne, 22 Jul 1857). Emma Tomkins Milton is buried in Melbourne General Cemetery (Baptist Church Grave 163) and marked with a stone. <https://www.findagrave.com/>

**29 August 1857:** Model Farm / Industrial Home: John L. Milton, M.D. apologized to the 150 gentlemen who had signed a requisition to the mayor of Melbourne to convene a meeting to develop the principles and objects of his proposed Model Farm or Industrial Home intended to remove the barriers that “immigrants, operatives, persons of both sexes out of employment, destitute and deserted children, juvenile and adult offenders and erring females are being subjected” to. The proposition had neither been forgotten nor abandoned, but suffered from uncontrollable circumstances and procrastination. (*The Age*, Melbourne 29 August 1857). It seems clear that the cause of delay was the illness and death of Emma Milton, who had undoubtedly assisted her husband in their work.

## Death of John Lawrence Milton 1869

**19 October 1869:** *The Age* (Melbourne, 22 October 1869)

“Dr. Milton the well-known lay missionary of Melbourne, died on Sunday night in the Benevolent Asylum, in which he found a refuge for his old age some twelve months ago. We are informed that during his stay in the asylum Dr. Milton continued his well-meant efforts among the inmates till a few weeks since, when illness confined him to his bed. He died, apparently in a very peaceful state of mind. It is understood that he will be buried today; and some desire has been expressed that his remains might be borne to the grave with something more suitable than a pauper’s funeral.”

The Benevolent Asylum reported the death in the same newspaper, saying that Dr. John Milton was 76, a native of England [sic] and had been admitted as a patient in June 1868.

J. L. Milton was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. <https://www.findagrave.com/>

## Afterword

I began this essay as an attempt to bring recognition to a man now only known at Rawdon, if at all, as the minister with his name in the Christ Church register for half a year. He needs to be honoured for initiating the construction of the first Christ Church that was built in the village and for promoting education based in strong local schools that supported children of every denomination.

Susan Q Wilson has been a dear friend for many years and a long-time supporter of *UP TO RAWDON*. She read an early draft of this essay and wrote:

“What emerges is a picture of a man of sincerity, decency, and principle, but ill-suited to the realities of life, hence, perhaps, his insolvency. Willing to be a vocal outsider vis-à-vis ‘the

establishment' because of his principles. Willing to put his energies behind causes that would improve the lot of the disadvantaged (full marks from me for his feminism, though the word hadn't been invented yet). But someone who never found a real foothold in life, though he certainly tried, over and over again."