



# Hugh's News

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The Friends of Hugh Miller

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## What's on at Hugh Miller's Birthplace Museum this summer?

By James Ryan

Hugh Miller's Birthplace Museum has already had a great start to 2026. This year we are celebrating the 185<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *The Old Red Sandstone* (in my opinion Hugh's best book!) with a year of super science and fossil fun.

In March, Debbie and myself (James - ed.) attended several community engagement events, including Culloden Battlefield's Community Weekend and VisitInverness's expo, to promote the exciting offering at Hugh Miller's Birthplace. We also hosted our annual Easter Egg Hunts in early April but this time with a prehistoric twist: this year's theme was dinosaurs, and we even had a *Tyrannosaurus rex* take part in the festivities! Thanks to our fossil theme, this year's egg hunt was truly record-breaking and we saw a 185% increase in attendance compared with 2025 - in fact, we were number 2 across all of the National Trust for Scotland regarding attendance increase. We even ran out of chocolate eggs twice!

Looking ahead the museum is taking part in the Scottish Geology Festival with a fabulous exhibition on the exciting recent scientific research conducted on the rocks around Cromarty - including the new work done by Bob Davidson and Sidney Johnston. In keeping with Hugh Miller's desire to



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make science accessible, this exhibit brings the past and present together and introduces our guests to the amazing geological work taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "Re-entering the Old Red" runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> and finishes at the end of July. Our other Geology Festival offering is our "Hutton Birthday Trail" - a fun kid's museum trail focusing on learning about the life of James Hutton and finding the perfect present for his 300<sup>th</sup> birthday. This trail is included with museum admission and runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> until the end of August.

Outside the Geology Festival, we have another jam-packed Summer of Science in the works. Alongside our brilliant Fossil Walks which return for their third year, our kids Science Club makes a triumphant comeback after last year's massive success. With four sessions planned for the summer holidays, covering insects, armoured dinosaurs, weather, and rockpool animals, we're looking forward to inspiring more mini scientists. We also have two big days happening in July: our "Living History Days" (28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July) will see the cottage come to life as we welcome reenactors from different points in Cromarty's history, whilst our "Space Day" (13<sup>th</sup> August) will celebrate all things astronomical following Hugh Miller's trip around the Moon earlier this year aboard Artemis II. Of course, our biggest event of the year returns this October for "Hugh Miller's Big Birthday Weekend" (9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October) with a weekend of family fun celebrations. We are still in early planning stages for this, but we can guarantee our very popular rocket will be returning for that!

To find out more and plan your visit to Hugh Miller's Birthplace, visit our website or follow the museum on Facebook and Instagram (@HughMillersBirthplaceNTS) to stay updated on all of the exciting stuff happening at the birthplace of our favourite Victorian Scot!



*Top: Easter dinosaur fun*

*Above: Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage in Cromarty with the Museum building behind, and the copper dome of Cromarty Courthouse visible too. Spring 2026*

*All images on Pages 1 - 3 are courtesy of James Ryan*



Images from visitor activities in 2026

Top left: James launches ballistically

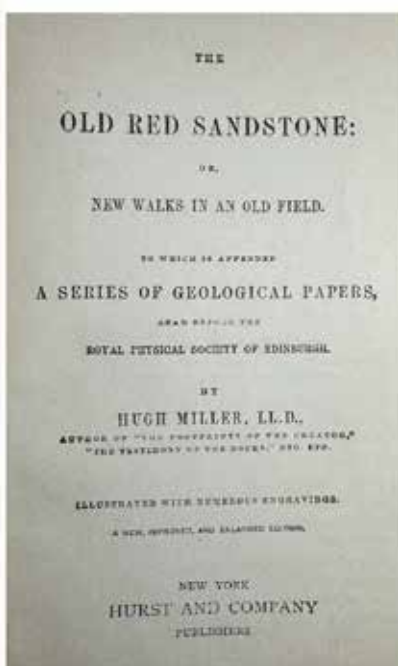
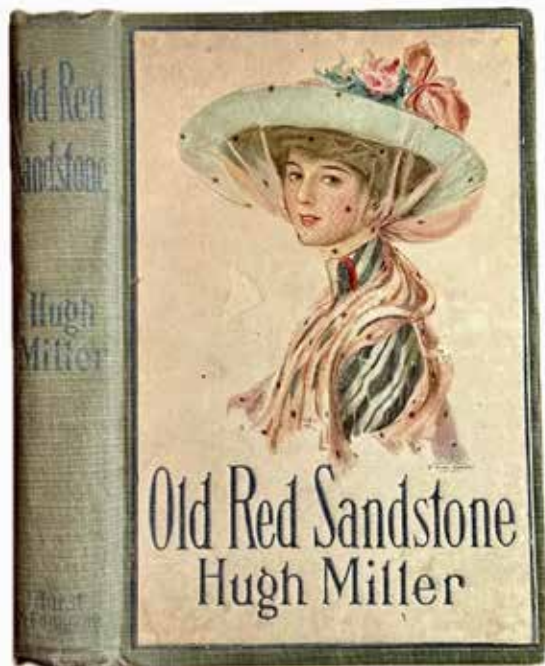
Top right: Debbie in attendance at the Hugh Miller's Birthplace Cottage & Museum stand at the VisitInverness expo

Above: Activities in the Museum and Cottage for younger visitors

# Hugh Miller - from my collection

By Phil James

Last October I acquired, via an eBay seller in Colorado, USA, this interesting copy of Miller's *The Old Red Sandstone*. It is undated, but is likely from around 1910. The title page confirms the publisher as HURST AND COMPANY, NEW YORK (1871-1919), and states "A NEW, IMPROVED, AND ENLARGED EDITION". Following the title page there is an "AMERICAN PUBLISHERS' NOTICE TO THE NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION", signed off "BOSTON, April, 1858". This is, in fact, exactly the same as appeared in previous American editions as early as 1859 that I own, albeit by different publishers and with dated title pages. Essentially, therefore, this is a reprint of the same edition, but bound with this



pictorial cover, possibly as a marketing ploy intended to attract a new readership. The fairly cheap green cloth is typical of that era of publishing; a long way removed from the very attractive earlier American editions of Miller's books.

I have always been amazed at the presence Hugh Miller's books had in America, both during and after his lifetime. Four of his major works in the 1850's were first published in the same year on both sides of the Atlantic - a similar achievement

to Charles Darwin! Published in Edinburgh either by Johnson and Hunter or Thomas Constable & Co., and in Boston, Massachusetts by Gould and Lincoln, these titles were: *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (1854), *The Testimony of the Rocks* (1857), *The Cruise of the Betsey* (1858), and *Sketch-book of Popular Geology* (1859). It was also the case with at least three of the five later titles; I'm still trying to check the dates of two.

Looking carefully at the cover, the illustrated picture of the lady is on thin card that has been mounted onto the front cloth board, while the blue *Old Red Sandstone* title and *Hugh Miller* are heavily stamped into it. A thin blue line on the cloth frames the picture. Was this therefore an official publisher's edition? Unless another copy is found, we may never know, but I suspect it was, for the marketing reason mentioned above.

The front-cover picture - as far removed from Miller and geology as one could possibly imagine - is nonetheless delightful. The lady's hat and clothes are certainly typical of well-to-do American society around 1910. In very small text below the end of her wrap on the right-hand side, just above the "t" and "o" in *Sandstone*, it states "copyright 1909 by F. Earl Christy New York". F. Earl Christy was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was a trained artist, who produced paintings for various American companies, and designed dozens of magazine covers for many major publications of the day. It seems

his work was much sought after for advertising as well. I have found this postcard with the same illustration, advertising the Friedman-Shelby Shoe Co, of St Louis, Missouri; the copyright is now on the left and the company logo on the right. On the reverse it advertises a particular ladies' shoe. The factory apparently produced up to 2000 pairs of shoes daily!

Miller's principal American publisher was Gould and Lincoln, based in Boston, Massachusetts. Active from 1835 to 1874 they published the first American editions of all but one of Miller's thirteen major works, from 1851 to 1864. The exception was *Leading Articles*, which, as far as I can determine, was



first published in America by Virtue & Yorston, New York in 1870, the same year as the first Edinburgh edition. However, this may simply reflect the fact that I have not yet found any reference to a Gould and Lincoln edition.

There is a note by Gould and Lincoln in the first American edition of *The Cruise of the Betsey*, published posthumously in 1858, two years after Miller's tragic death and arranged by his widow, Lydia Miller. It states: "By a special arrangement with the late Hugh Miller, GOULD AND LINCOLN became the authorised American publishers of his works. By a similar arrangement made with the family since his decease, they will also publish his POSTHUMOUS Works, of which the present volume is the first".

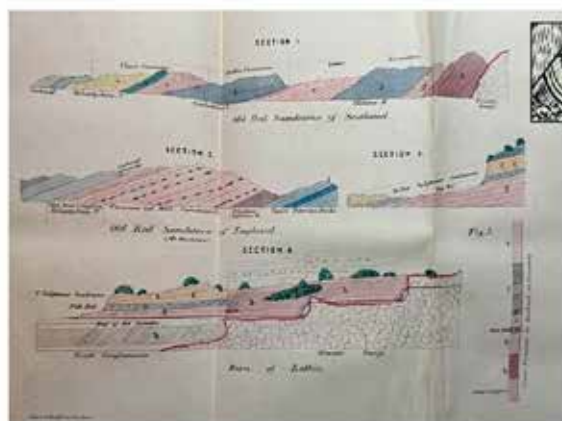
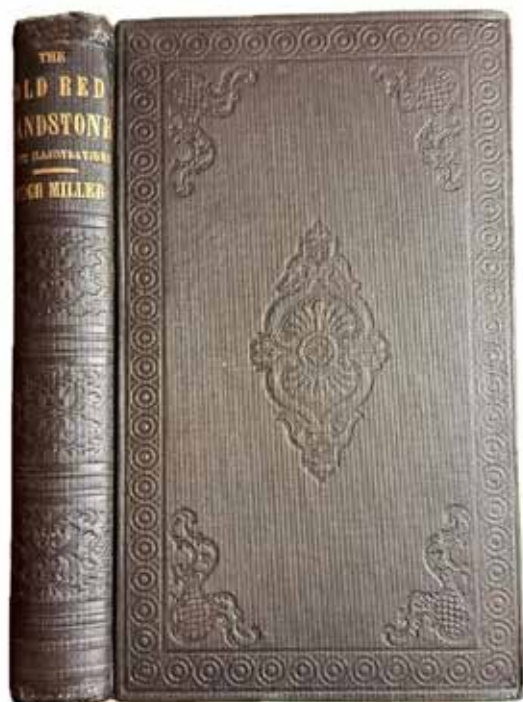
Strangely this note did not appear in *The Testimony of the Rocks*, also published posthumously in both Edinburgh and Boston the previous year, in 1857. The Gould and Lincoln version does, however, include a twenty-six-page "Memorials of the Death and Character of Hugh Miller with an Account of his Funeral Obsequies".

It is also interesting that Miller's wife Lydia, as far as I can determine, never used Gould and Lincoln to publish any of her own books, several of which were first published in America. Lydia's books were essentially for children, and published under her pseudonym Harriet Myrtle, and a occasionally as Mrs Hugh Miller, both before and after Hugh's death.

The first American editions of Miller's books were published by Gould and Lincoln in 1851, they were his four earliest major works: *Scenes and Legends* (1835), *The Old Red Sanstone* (1841), *First Impres-*

sions of England and its People (1847), and *Footprints of the Creator* (1849). Perhaps it is no coincidence that 1851 was also the year of The Great Exhibition, London, in which America participated with over 600 exhibitors! Miller himself also attended. Perhaps somewhere within that international context lay the catalyst for Miller, one of Scotland's celebrated Victorian authors, getting his books published in America!

It is generally considered that *The Old Red Sandstone* is Miller's most significant work. Here is my first American edition of 1851 which as the title page confirms, was taken from the fourth London (Edinburgh) edition. Bound in blind-stamped dark brown cloth with a gilt-lettered spine, it contains the same ten fossil-fish plates (*but without Johnstone & Hunter, Edinburgh at the bottom of each*) and the coloured folding frontispiece of geological sections, though annotated "*Tappun & Bradford's Lith., Boston*". My copy has an attractive bookplate belonging to Hiram Edmund Deats of Flemington, New Jersey. Deats was an American philatelist, historian and publisher. Incorporated into the design of the bookplate are a number of books, including Shakespeare, Dickens, and - second from left - Agassiz (see inset). This is a pleasing touch, if only a tenuous link to our story, for it almost certainly refers to Louis Agassiz, probably the greatest authority on fossil fish at that time and collaborator with Miller.

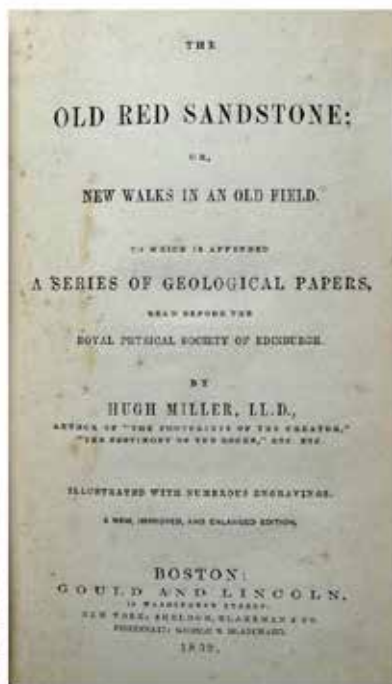
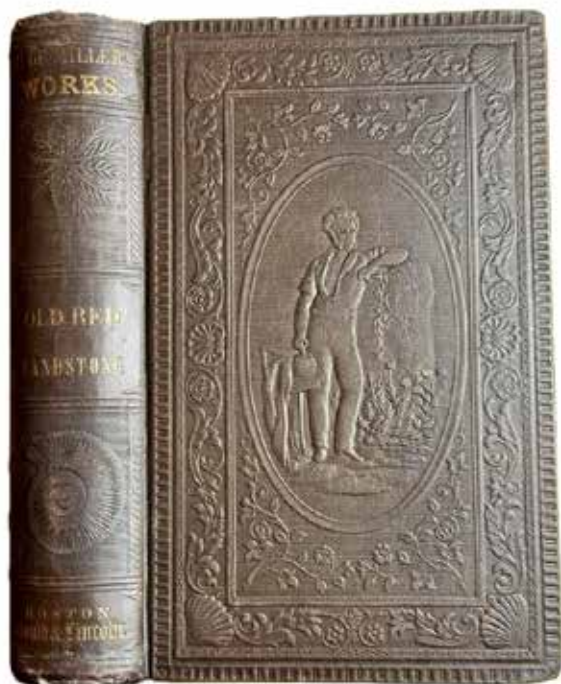


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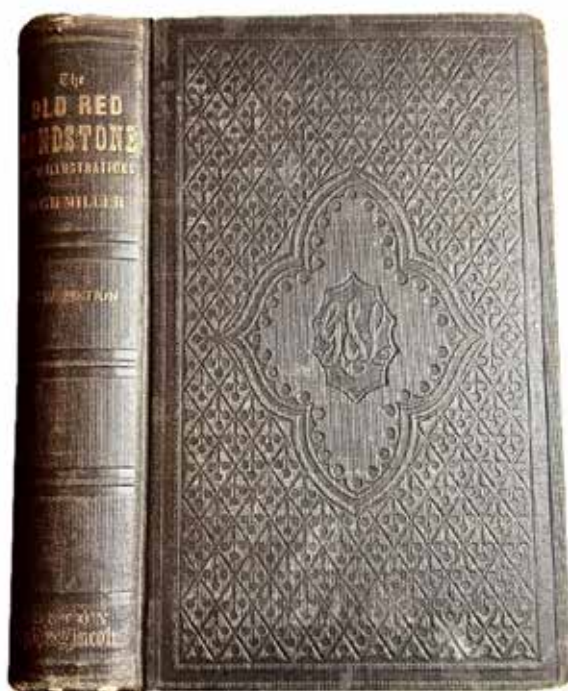
This 1851 first edition also has a Gould and Lincoln advertisement bound in at the front. It describes Miller and his book in glowing terms - "*Rarely has a more remarkable book come from the press... For, besides the important contributions which it makes to the science of Geology, it is written in a style which places the author at once among the most accomplished writers*

*of his age.... He proves himself to be in prose what Burns has been in poetry. We are not extravagant in saying that there is no geologist living who, in the descriptions of the phenomena of the science, has united such accuracy of statement with so much poetic beauty of expression*". High praise indeed!

I also own two copies of Gould and Lincoln's 1859 editions of *The Old Red Sandstone*, each with different bindings. Both are again in dark brown blind-stamped cloth, with gilt spine lettering. The first is



especially beautiful, showing Miller on the front and rear boards posing against a gravestone, chisel in one hand and mason's mallet in the other. It is based on the well-known early Calotype photograph, 1844, by the Scottish artists David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. Gould and Lincoln also used an engraving of the same image as frontispiece in their 1852 second edition of Miller's *Footprints of the Creator* (above right) - engraving by John Sartain from an original Talbotype (or calotype), which was the first negative-positive photographic process invented by William Henry Fox Talbot in the early 1840s. Incidentally, Miller posing against the gravestone, was simply a reflection on his earlier career as a stonemason which he had given up ten years earlier. The gravestone is in Old Calton Burial Ground, Edinburgh, and had been erected in about 1760 by Captain John Gray in memory of his parents.

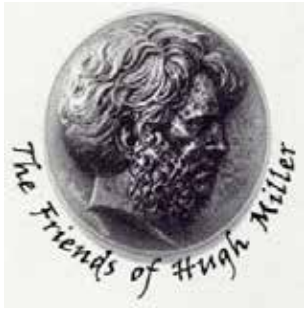


Additionally, the spine features a blind-stamped fossil crinoid at the top and an ammonite at the bottom. It really is a delightful copy.

My other copy of the 1859 edition is again blind-stamped but this time the design on the front and rear boards incorporates Gould and Lincoln's monogram within an elaborate patterned framework.

The purpose of this article has been to give members of The Friends of Hugh Miller some visual impressions of American editions of *The Old Red Sandstone*, and I hope it has achieved that aim. Any errors in my accompanying notes are entirely my own, and I would be very pleased to hear from members with further thoughts. My email is [philip.r.james55@gmail.com](mailto:philip.r.james55@gmail.com)

All book images are the author's own. The postcard is in the public domain.



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