

## Whether One or Two: The Story of Millie-Christine McKoy

### Overview

Millie-Christine McKoy, conjoined twins, were born in Columbus County, NC in 1851. Born to enslaved parents, the twins shared one spinal column and were likely two girls with one nervous system. They referred to themselves as one person, however, and hyphenated their name to reflect this belief.

The North Carolina State Archives has a collection of private papers that relates to Millie-Christine. This private collection, PC 266, has been digitized and will soon be available on the Archives' website.

### Objectives

Students will be able to

- Discuss the challenges of Millie-Christine's life.
- Discuss the treatment over time of the physically challenged.
- Articulate the reasons Millie-Christine thought of herself as one person rather than two.
- Identify the differences and similarities between Millie-Christine and Chang and Eng Bunker.
- Understand the importance of archival collections.

### Preparation

Students should study the online collection.

<http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov/educationalresources/milliechristine.html>

### Activities

Students should read a variety of materials. The following questions should provoke discussion.

- Would Millie-Christine have wanted to be separated if that had been possible? Why or why not?
- What were the challenges faced by Millie-Christine?
- What were the challenges faced by Millie-Christine's family?
- Why do you think that Millie-Christine thought of herself as one person?
- How did people view people who were different or who had handicaps in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

**Enrichment and Extension**

- Research the conjoined twins phenomenon. How does this happen?
- Research NC's other set of conjoined twins, Chang and Eng Bunker. How were they different from Millie-Christine?
- Search the web for additional information and photographs. TEACHER NOTE: Be advised that broad searches will pull up some graphic photographs—teacher may want to do the search and assign specific sites to students.

**Sources**

PC 266, Millie-Christine Papers, State Archives of North Carolina.

*Dictionary of North Carolina State Archives*

Martel, Joanne, *Millie-Christine: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, Winston-Salem: John F. Blair Publishers, 2000.

[docsouth.unc.edu/neh/carolinatwin/carolinatwin.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/carolinatwin/carolinatwin.html)