

# JOAQUIN MILLER

## NEWSLETTER

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If this is the twelfth newsletter you have received it is time to renew. For those who already have, thank you! Since this is a labor of love, the subscription price will remain \$15.00 for 12 issues. Remember issues are published as material accumulates. Back issues are available @ \$1.50 each. These are becoming collectibles. Fill in your collection. Only a few still available on original paper, otherwise Xerox copies will be provided. Essays and news items from subscribers, especially differing points of view, are particularly welcome.

### Research

So much more needs to be done on Joaquin Miller's newspaper articles. He was so basically a journalist and much of his work is still not identified as his. As usual, the point is best made with one of his poems:

The Press.

Let there be light: God spake, and lo,  
Light was, where only night had been.  
But when the Press flashed 'twas as though  
God spake from out that night again,

And knowledge, truth, and sense of right  
Walked hand in hand with holy light.  
Who dare profane truth's altar when  
Uprise God's high priests of the pen?

(Joaquin Miller, The Call (May 28, 1893): 1)

A tantalizing topic would be JM's correspondence and relations with such editors as John Swinton, editor of the New York Times. Swinton is still frequently quoted today :

"The business of the journalists is to destroy the truth, to lie outright, to pervert, to vilify, to fawn at the feet of mammon, and to sell his country and his race for his daily bread. You know it and I know it, and what folly is this toasting an independent press? We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes. We

are the jumping jacks, they pull the strings and we dance. Our talents, our possibilities and our lives are all the property of other men. We are intellectual prostitutes." (— John Swinton, preeminent New York journalist, ca. 1880, in response to a toast to "the independent press" <http://www.olympen.com/harmon/quotes.htm>).

JM's appearances in this newspaper began in 1873 with his "Joaquin Miller: Creation According to the Modocs" New York Times (August 16, 1873): 3:1, and was followed by "Sunrise in Venice" reprinted from Harper's Magazine in the New York Times (July 11, 1875): 4:1. His 1875 Pilgrims of the Plains. New York Times (July 18, 1875): 4:4 is reprinted in the 1900 Oregon Historical Quarterly. His 1882 Mother Egypt New York Times (October 8, 1882): 11:7 also appeared in The Advance and The Wasp (October 21, 1882). "Ballad of a Brave Cattleman" followed in New York Times (November 12, 1882): 12:1 and "Manitoba" [About his son] in The Advance. New York Times (December 31, 1882): 3:1. JM's "How the Millionaire Fleeced the Poet" originally appeared in the Somerville, NJ Unionist and was reprinted in the New York Times February 10, 1883. His 1885 contribution was "Play Writing Lecture" in the New York Times (September 2, 1885): 4:4. It is thus no surprise that Wagner (1929) refers to a letter to Miller from Swinton dated May 14, 1898. There immediately followed "Joaquin Miller: His Account of His Housekeeping Experiences in the Klondike Country" reprinted from The Land of Sunshine by the New York Times (June 25, 1898): 492:2, Saturday Supplement. And lastly JM's uncharacteristic biography of a living friend "Edwin Markham [1852-1940] — His Life and His Verse," New York Times (November 18, 1899). They had both come to California from Oregon about the same time and their families were acquainted.

During these same years 1873-1899 JM also wrote for The Independent and other newspapers in New York and elsewhere. His articles and poems

were reprinted countrywide. JM was not just a contributing journalist but also an active participant in community affairs and a prominent member of the local debating society wherever he lived. Canyon City, OR was no exception. There on Thurs. eve. Nov. 6, 1867 Miller was chosen as an “affirmative support” to debate the following question. “Resolved: That ignorance and superstition have caused more misery in the world than pride and ambition (Grant Co. Museum transcript).” For additional research there are always more unanswered time-line questions about JM’s travels. Here is a challenge for some Idaho scholar. From February through May of 1864 where was Miller? If Joaquin Miller did choose the pseudonym “Skurb” in 1859 from Derby’s “Squibob” did he also choose to update it to “Old Squib” in 1864? If so he would have been in Idaho. Was JM in Idaho in February of 1864? Obviously he wasn’t over in the Sixes, OR where Minnie Myrtle was awaiting the birth of their first child. Could he have been revisiting his own and his brother’s old mining scenes in eastern Oregon and Idaho? Grab your maps and your thinking caps. Serendipity led me to an article that sounded strangely like JM in the February 20, 1864 Boise News Vol. 1 (22): 1: 4, which indicated that “Old Squib” had arrived by foot [I’ll bet he was on a mule or a horse?] in Boise City and at Fort Boise February 4, 1864. “Squib’s” article used Miller’s favorite word “hoary.” The Boise News Vol. 1 (24): 4:2, March 5, 1864 followed saying that Feb. 20, “Old Squib” is back writing from Owyhee, having returned from Boise City via Booneville. This is followed in the Boise News Vol. 1 (25) (March 12, 1864): 3:2 with a further March 8, note in the Editor News: Correspondence from “Old Squib.” This March 12, issue of the Boise News Vol. 1, also included a poem? “Lines to a Coquette,” signed “Wanderer.” Wanderer’s “Lines” may not have been Miller’s but they surely reflected his sentiments expressed elsewhere. We know from Waymire’s reports that “...We reached Harney County about sixty miles south of Canyon City on the 30th. [ Mar.]. We found a body of fifty-four citizens under command of C. H. Miller, whom they had elected as captain (Wagner, 1929:38).” I didn’t chance upon anything more from “Old Squib” until the Boise News, Vol. 1(33): 1:5, May 7, 1864 issue which

carried Correspondence from “Old Squib” supposedly originating in Boise City April 24. It discussed Owyhee country and the Volcano district discovered by “one Mr. Miller and party” but could have been written from anywhere. Lastly there was an article supposedly written May 28, by “Old Squib” from Ruby City (Boise News, Vol. 1(37): 2:1 June 4, 1864). DCS opines “The Dalles to Old Fort Boise road, which passed through CC, likely had a junction which passed off to the south and through Ruby and Silver City (Owyhee, country). A road from that country very likely could take a traveler north into the Boise country or south to Winemucca in Nevada. When I say road, I should clarify and amend that to say more like a goat trail. They may have gotten wagons over it but it would have been a rough ride. (Dennis C. Smith Aug. 22, 2001).” Our perennial research question is with us again. A recent rereading of Juanita’s booklet on The Hights gives her father’s birth date as Nov. 10, 1841. From my genealogy records on the Millers I have his parents marrying in 1836, his brother John being born in 1837 and:

- Cincinnatus Hiner Miller (1ABCDE) aka. Joaquin.
  - b. 1840 according to 1860 census.
  - b. 1841 Liberty, Union Co., Indiana, according to a marker in Indiana. Nov. 10, 1841 according to Collected Poems. Juanita Miller also said Nov. 10, 1841. According to a legal deposition at time of his divorce in April 19, 1870 he was 29 which he would be by Nov. 10, 1870 if born in 1841.
  - b. 1842 on a farm later owned in 1906 by Monroe Lafuze according to B.F. Snyder (BLL).
  - d. February 17, 1913 “The Hights,” Alameda Co., CA.

## Happenings

Scott McKeown and Fred Granata have put up a really great Joaquin Miller site on the web (<http://www.joaquinmiller.com/index.htm>). Congratulations! But let’s get that birth date closer to reality. November 10, 2001- exactly 160 years after Nov. 10, 1841- Scott and Fred interviewed Orcutt Frost on JM for their forthcoming Miller documentary. Another web site Literary Traveler by Jack Adler has

many snide spin-takes on Miller's life and unfortunately still is also touting the now thoroughly repudiated 1837 birth date for JM (<http://www.literary-traveler.com/miller/joaquinmiller.htm>).

## Publications

Rex Burress (RB) has brought us up to date on "The Changing Nature of Joaquin Miller Park" in Bay Nature (October December 2001): 8-9. JM originally acquired 77-odd acres and the park now includes 425 acres. RB has walked all the trails. He is an expert on John Muir and has been active in Bay Area nature activities since the days of George Mott. Although Rex now resides in Oroville, CA he still conducts nature walks and gives lectures. Rex writes "Miller's property contained few trees at the time he acquired it. Being a man who was passionate in his love for trees (he established the first Arbor Day in California), Miller was quite eager to populate his own refuge with them." RB has marked for us on Juanita's old map where the redwood trees and rings were and are along Palo Seco Creek which was evidently the northerly boundary of JM's "Hights." That picture we have all seen of those barren hills on which JM built and planted trees does not take us over the ridge and down into Palo Seco Creek or up to the next highest ridge and on east to Redwood Canyon where there was so much logging in the 1860s. Remember Wagner wrote that Miller had quoted the Arabs as saying "Plant a tree, dig a well, rear your offspring, and die." This was the old Arab ideal of life, as far back, perhaps, as the days of Abraham (Wagner 1929: 113)." This JM did again on his "Hights" as he had done in Canyon City, Oregon. But here he was to build a cemetery too.

National Geographic mentions JM in Priit J. Vesilind's, "Once and Future Fury—California's Volcanic North" National Geographic (October 2001): 76 Miller quoted twice "Joaquin Miller, utopian and perhaps first among the popular writers who were touched by the mountain, called it 'lonely as God, and white as a winter moon.' "... "White and flashing like a pyramid of silver' is how poet Joaquin Miller saw Mount Shasta."

We were finalizing the following report for this issue at the time of our Dec. 14, 2001 storm when the dock was made into two inch pieces and the roof

shingles went east; so we will send it along for your collection now rather than to wait for December, 2002.

Christmas.

JM wrote a few lines now and then about Christmas but not too much. Some of these things MGK has not seen. Perhaps you can find them or more and we can share? One of JM's Christmas stories was from his childhood years in Indiana but it didn't get into newspaper print until his "Reminiscences of Joaquin Miller—Fascinated by Tales of Fremont" (Seattle Post Intelligencer, Volume LI (123) (March 17, 1907): 6. (magazine section)). Copyright by Joseph B. [R.?] Bowles.

"A brother of Billy Fields had come up from Tennessee and papa took him and his wife and their boy, Thomas Jefferson Russell Fields, in with us; they setting up a bed in the other corner of our cabin. Russell Fields was a tailor, and good with a gun. He was nearly always out in the woods, and kept us well supplied with venison, pheasants and wild turkey.

One Sunday morning a string of turkeys was seen tearing away at the little stock of corn in the dooryard, and papa told John D., [my brother], to put on his moccasins and to drive them away, for there was snow on the ground, and then hasten back to prayers. But Russell Fields was at the open door, with his gun.

"Squire, may I shoot?"

"Shoot, and I will hold the door."

As the smoke began to clear we could see a great big gobbler bounding up and down in the snow by the corn shock. Then John D. came puffing and blowing as he dragged it thru the snow. We all shouted, till suddenly papa remembered it was Sunday. It was an enormous bird and we kept it for Christmas; laughing at papa all the time, and mother telling him he would surely be "churched" for holding the door and helping to shoot a turkey on Sunday when he should have been at prayers."

To date we have the following chronological record of JM's activities and publications re Christmas:

**1871** The Wanderer's Poem. The Christmas Locket: A Holiday Number of Old and New. Boston: Roberts

Brothers. pp. 5-6. [BAL says this poem became *At Bethlehem* in Songs of Sunlands, London 1873, and in Complete Poetical Works, San Francisco 1897.]

**1871** Christmas holiday, Miller visited Ambrose Bierce in San Francisco (Marberry, 1953:109). Miller seems to have adopted the Southern and later mining camp custom of visiting friends on Christmas Day.

**1879** The Bell. New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company. [BAL (6:216) notes: "A novelty booklet cut in the outline of a bell...By Joaquin Miller? Untitled two eight-line stanzas beginning: 'The Christmas bells as sweetly chime / As in the day when first they rang..., ' p. 7. Here credited to Miller."]

**1885** *Christmas Wishes...* Boston: L. Prang & Co. [BAL (6:194) notes that this was a single card with Miller's poem that begins, "This book should hold a hundred leaves / And every leaf a song as dear..." ] [HUN]

**1886** Dec. 24, JM wrote in San Francisco, *California's Christmas* which was printed in the San Francisco Morning Call, Vol. 61.25 (Dec. 25, 1886): 1: 6 [HON] [CAL]

**1887** *The First Christmas Morn.* The Independent. New York. December 22. [Dated Oakland, California.] (Poem or Essay?)

**1888** "Joaquin Miller called at the Palace Hotel looking well and happy. He brought with him his new volume, which he has dedicated to 'Dear Lil' H. Coit, the dearest and best of Californians--as we were boys together and you have been true blue all these long years, without your permission, I have dedicated this book to you. Read it, the dedication I mean, then deliver the book to the Bohemians. Xmas, 1888. Yours, Joaquin Miller." [from the diary of Martha Hitchcock] (Drew Sparks & Sally Kellman *A Salon at Larkmead: a charmed life in the napa valley*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press 2000, p. 133).

**1888** There was an anonymous advertisement that "'The Duchess,' Joaquin Miller, John Vance Cheney, and Ambrose Bierce will contribute Original Literary Features to the CHRISTMAS MORNING EXAMINER." San Francisco. The Daily Examiner (December 24). Vol. XLVII 178:5:4.

**1888** *Santa Claus in San Francisco.* The Daily Examiner. San Francisco. Christmas issue. Vol. XLVII (179) : : Dec. 25. [This issue is not available on microfilm and Examiner refuses to provide.]

**1889** *Under the Syrian Stars.* The Independent. New York. February 2, 1888. [HON] [See also Building the City Beautiful 1905: 32.] Rptd. during the holidays by various papers such as Bellingham Bay Reveille, Bellingham, WA. (Dec. 27, 1889).

**1893** "Christmas Eve in the Palm Land" and other poems. Readings from California Poets. Selected by Edmund Russell. San Francisco. 124 pages. [BAL (6:214) notes: this publication, "Contains much material by Miller, including some extracts and altered titles; none here first published in book form."]

**1896** A picture of Joaquin Miller at The Hights. Christmas Day, 1896. Copyright George Wharton James. Out West. Vol. 5. (3,4) (March-April, 1913): 140.

**1897** "As for holidays, we keep them here in our Klondike cabins as religiously as anywhere in the world. The Elks gave a grand ball in Dawson, Christmas eve, for the benefit of the Sisters' Hospital, and all the best people were there; admission one-half ounce—and the result was great. We saw the old year out and the new year in here in our cabin at the head of newspaper row. We had with us Harper's Weekly, Frank Leslie's Monthly, the New York Times, the New York Herald, the Chicago Tribune. We talked art and literature, and drank good tea. Our wildest dissipation was pipes; and that was all; yet I don't know that I ever spent a pleasanter New year's eve." ("Daily Life in a Klondike Cabin." Land of Sunshine/Out West 9 (June 1898): 16-23.)

**1901** Maud (JM's daughter) died on Christmas Eve and was buried near Joaquin's funeral pyre (San Francisco Call, December 26).

**1904** "Christmas 1904." [BAL (6:2202) notes that this card contains six lines and is otherwise unlocated.]

**1905** December 20. Margaret De Witt (Joaquin's mother) died, "The Hights," Oakland, Alameda Co., CA. Others give December 22. (Fahl 1861: 374 says [Witt] 12/21/1905.)

**1906** "Florence Court, California St. N.W., Washington, D.C.

12 7/6

Dear George I have been deep in my work writing a sort of autobiography beginning in the wilds of Indiana when Papa was teaching school and Mother was doing almost a man's work: and so on till I got out of the wilderness of California: Last evening I got three \$100 checks: gave one to Abbie and one to Juanita Christmas gifts. I hold the other \$100 to pay on the water right you wrote about:" (Letter to George M. Miller, December 7, 1906. Frontier Vol. 12 (2)1932.

**1935** Seven Songs... Music by Juanita Miller. Souvenir Shop at "The Hights" Joaquin Miller Road Oakland, California. [BAL (6:209) notes, "All material herein had prior book publication. 'Indian;' extracted from '*Loua Ellah*,' Specimens, 1868, p. 15. 'California. A Saraband;' otherwise '*California's Christmas*,' Joaquin Miller's Works, 1909, Vol. 4."] A Xerox copy of "Seven Songs" Words by Joaquin Miller Music by Juanita Miller includes "Indian," "California. A Saraband [a popular and vigorous Spanish castanet dance-a slow stately Spanish dance in triple meter derived from this]," "49," "God's Garden," "Mothers of Men," "Judge Not," and "Berkeley."

**1961** Christmas Morning; SATB. Words by Joaquin Miller, music by David P. Appleby. (Christmas choral series. 485-37018). Broadman Press. June 1, 1961.

**1975** Christmas Morning. Piano solo (with words).

Words by Joaquin Miller, musical setting, Arthur Zepp. Pro Art Publications, Inc. September 10.

So Christmas had many meanings and memories for JM as it does for us all. MGK is looking for a stocking filled with notes from you on your latest JM question or discovery.

Belated Happy Holidays and may those of 2002 be even better.

Margaret Guilford-Kardell

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