

JOAQUIN MILLER

NEWSLETTER

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Happenings

Shannon Applegate and her sister Susan opened Oregon's oldest pioneer homestead still owned by the original family, the Historic Applegate House in Yoncalla, for a 150th birthday celebration July 20, 2002. It is to be open only on an as scheduled basis. Miller enthusiasts travelling that way should phone ahead several weeks in advance to Shannon (541 847-3139) to make financial arrangements for their group to visit or possibly even to take tea at the house. Remember Joaquin and his eldest brother John over-nighted with the Applegates on their original trips to and from the California gold fields 1854-59. The house is located on Old Applegate Road off of Halo St, east of the main street (Hwy. 99) in Yoncalla. Take Route 38 along the Umpqua River to Drain, turn right and go about five miles into Yoncalla. A somewhere, sometime first gathering of Joaquin Miller scholars, fans, collectors, western poets, writers, and etc. is being planned for 2003 or 2004. The first organizational meeting for the event is scheduled for later this year. Ramrod for this project is Chris De Hart, c/o Department of History, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA 95503, cpd7001@humboldt.edu

Happenings and Research

JM and Apalachicola: "Teen Recovering From Florida Shark Attack: First Attack In Recent Memory Near Apalachicola. Posted 12:29 p.m. EDT. June 4, 2002. PELHAM, Ala.--Matt Tichenor was floating on a raft 50 or 60 feet out in the Gulf of Mexico off Florida's St. George Island late Friday afternoon when he heard a big splash off to his left ..." Yes, Apalachicola still exists even though my computer can't spell it. Yes, JM spelled it "Apalachacola" in his 1891 "What is a Cariboo, Anyhow?" The Wasp 26.1 (January 24, 1891): 15-16. This typical JM tall tale is essentially based on one of his earliest 1873 offerings in this line, "The End of a Leather Nose" The Independent

25.1283 (July 3): 833-834. One could, perhaps, brand "What is a Cariboo, Anyhow?" JM's tallest tale as he seems not to have been in the Fraser River rush in 1858/59 but he had plenty of time to hear about it, first in the mines of Shasta and Siskiyou in 1859, in Cañon City, Oregon in the 1860s or later in Oakland, California in the 1890s for the people and places were factual and JM only changed the spellings in minor ways. One might also speculate as to J's use of "nigger and greaser" and colloquial speech in 1890. Was he merely reflecting the prejudicial speech patterns of the day or was he doing an "Archie Bunker sit-com lesson?" In JM's 1891 tall tale the people and places are nearly all verifiable. It is only the story line that is a tall tale. So few have had a chance to read it that the newsletter is inaugurating a new feature of printing some of JM's lesser known gems. But you must have some background to enjoy them.

"Apalachacola" is still on the west coast of Florida but is spelled Apalachicola. Colonel Francis E. Gray was probably Col. Thomas E. Gray with whom Miller practiced law December 1864 to August 1865 in Cañon City (Frost 1967: 39). Uncle John Fennesy was John Fennessy who worked at a saloon at 849 Broadway in Oakland in 1890 and was at the Phoenix Wine Rooms at 7th & Broadway in Oakland in 1892. Could Miller have been advertising for his friend's newest stand? By 1891 JM's readers knew him well and probably most of the people he was honoring by using them as characters in his story. Perhaps a slightly misspelled name, while giving printed recognition to the character, also protected JM from legal action. For example John W. Whally was John W. Whalley (1833-1900) and not a Senator as labeled by JM in the tale but an actual Oregon legislator in 1870. More importantly, Whalley had taught school in Siskiyou Co. (1858-64) and there was admitted to the bar in 1861. In 1864 he went to Cañon City where he was briefly associated with JM but longer with L. O. Stern (Bench & Bar 1910 Courtesy Fred Granata). Ike

Hare was Isaac Hare, a miner from Pennsylvania, whom Miller first met in Old Shasta and who was listed by some as having been with JM in the Battle of Castle Crags in 1855 and buried there near Castle Crags Tavern. But Hare evidently again mined in Cañon City in the 1860s and still visited JM in Oakland in the 1890s. This Isaac Hare of Shasta County was a member of California State Assembly 13th District, 1857-58. He had come to California according to the New Orleans Daily Picayune, May 26, 1850 on the steamship Falcon bringing "... a company of California emigrants, under Capt. French, who intend reaching the land of gold by the overland route through Texas. They left New York on the Georgia, and were transferred to the Falcon in Havana." But the Daily Picayune, New Orleans, June 2, 1850 said they left on the Galveston. The Daily Alta California reported the arrival of some of the surviving members of the party on December 16, 1850. (<http://www.pt5dome.com/CFrench.html>) (<http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/hare-harju.html>).

MGK finds no record of JM having personally known "Bully Wright" or if Capt. Tom Wright (his real name) ever migrated to Oakland, California. But JM did know Cherokee Bill who played chuck-a-luck at the town of Yale during the Fraser River rush in 1859 and he could have told JM about Bully Wright. Another person wrote: "LATE in the month of July, 1858, I embarked on the small stern-wheel steamer Enterprise, owned and commanded by Capt. Tom Wright, for the Fraser River Gold Mines. My destination was Yale, then the head of navigation." (*Chasing the Golden Butterfly* by David W. Higgins). These light-draft steamers to Fort Yale "... were owned by Captain Wright, who was generally called Bully Wright." (<http://www.inventorsmuseum.com/hallidie.htm>) (<http://www.tbc.gov.bc.ca/culture/school-net/yale/people/story1.htm>).

As for Boon Helm, David English, and Jakey Williams they were all known to JM from his Shasta days and he also wrote about their hangings in other stories. And, oh yes, cariboo are herbivorous. Now the tale.

What is a Cariboo?

Colonel Gray, a large-bodied and one-eyed lawyer of Canyon City, neither would or could tell the

truth. He used to say that he hoped to be a great lawyer some day and so must keep in constant practice.

And yet for all, jolly, old Francis E. Gray of Apalachicola was not really a liar; not a malicious liar, at least, nor was he entirely bad at heart, large as he was.

We were all sitting one night in uncle John Fennesy's saloon--dear old Uncle Johnny, who now keeps the Phoenix over in Oakland, and does not look a day older than he did then--when in stepped spruce and dapper John W. Whally, another lawyer, brushing the falling snow from off his shoulders and shaking a newspaper previous to folding it up and putting it in his pocket. He had perhaps been in his office reading about the Cariboo up in the Cariboo mines, and maybe he only wanted to smell out a bit of business of some sort, for a shrewd pushing and all-alive man was Whally. He is now one of the very many rich men of Portland, Oregon, but his aristocratic British nose has lost none of that push and pugnacity which led him in the old, old days to continually ask and ask, and ask.

"What is a Cariboo? I'll tell you, Whally, what a Cariboo is. Here take this chair. You look cold. There: Now just cock your heels up on the stove and I'll tell you all about the Cariboo. You see I came from Apalachicola by way of the Carribean Sea, and so, I know all about the Cariboo."

"Yes," said Whally, taking his feet down from the stove and stirring a teaspoon round and round on the table at his elbow by the side of Ike Hare, "yes, I've heard you say you came from Apalachicola, and do you know, I've heard people say that you always put in that long word Apalachicola merely to catch your breath when you forget what to say next, but what I want to know about is the Cariboo of the Cariboo mines."

"Just what I was a coming to, just what I was a coming to. Have another Hare?"

Yes, Hare would have another. For Hare had been a Member from Shasta County where he still resides: and as the malaria had been bad at Sacramento--but we must go on about the Cariboo.

Gray had taken off his one-eyed gold spectacles, and after wiping it persistently, and coughing slightly, as was his immemorial custom, he went on:

"There was an old, one legged barber at

Apalachicola when I was a boy that got married, — niggers, you know,— and the first time I went there to be shaved he told me he had started to Baltimore with his bride. Yes, sah! And with a hard and heavy jerk of his razor on the big leather strap between each word he said, ‘Yes, sah! Stat--ed to Ba--ti--mo on my wed--in--tow--er, foun er walk--in bad and cum back!’ “

“Well, what on earth has a one-legged negro from Apalachicola on a wedding tour to do with the Cariboo of the Cariboo mines?”

Col. Gray looked irritated at Whally and closed his mouth. But the member from Shasta opened it with hot-scotch all round, and when his mouth was well opened in this way it was sort of artesian.

“We left Apalachicola,” the Colonel went on, after once more wiping his glasses and coughing slightly as usual, “in a whale-boat and rowed right through the Carribean Sea, by the Cannibal Islands, and Rob’son Crusoe’s Islands--and--and after we had left Apalachicola——”

“And --got to San Francisco on the way to Cariboo——” said Whally eagerly.

“Exactly: as I was saying, after we had left Apalachicola and got to San Francisco--you didn’t go to the Frazer river, Hare eh? Well then you were not in San Francisco when I got there from Apalachicola.”

“But you are a long ways from Apalachicola now, Col. Gray,” said the member from Shasta, who also wanted to know all about the Cariboo.

“But you should have been in San Francisco at the time of the Frazer River. Phew! And old Bully Wright! Bully Wright was the owner of the ship line between San Francis co and the Frazer River. Well sah, in San Francisco they were wanting to hang Bully Wright for not taking them up the Frazer River fast enough: and when they got to Frazer River they were wanting to hang him for not taking them back to San Francisco fast enough! Fact, by——. Yes; bitters bar-keep, but no sugar. Here’s to ye Whally!”

“And here’s straight to the Cariboo, Colonel!”

“Straight to the Cariboo country, now; but on our way up, with our blankets in [on] our backs we came to a poor fellow by the trail who had made what he called spruce beer. Och! I said, ‘look here, are you broke?’ He shook the two quarters together and said

‘no not now,’

‘Well said I, ‘roll up your blankets and come along, for some fellow will kill you if you try to keep this thing up.’ And so he came right along. We called the poor, limp and lame and sick looking person Spruce--after his beer. But he was not spruce, precisely, by a good deal, for he had a cancer, yes, sah, a cancer right above the heart where you can’t amputate. Now that one legged nigger in Apalachicola——

Hare eagerly treated this time, as the Colonel coughed and wiped his glasses, and after wiping his mouth he to the delight of all leaped right into the Cariboo mines and went on with his sad story about poor stricken old Spruce.

“The day after we got into the Cariboo mines I went straight off to find a doctor for poor old Spruce, although I knew, or, at least, I thought I knew, that Spruce would never leave the Cariboo mines alive.”

Here the kindly old Colonel coughed again and taking off his glasses, by some inadvertence he this time did not polish the one glass in the gold rim, but lifted the corner of the handkerchief unobserved, as he supposed to a moistening eye.

“Well,” the doctor said “there was just one possible hope. This doctor was a great man in his day. Dead now. But, do you know he had the greatest theory about curing cancer and such like things that ever was.”

The member from Shasta wanted to learn, and even the eager and inquiring nose of John W. Whally forgot its hot scent on the Cariboo and poked its pugnacious self straight up under the gold rimmed spectacles.

“It was this. His theory was that the earth our common mother earth the earth which purifies and restores all things is the one great and only materia medica . If a man had a limb broken, if a miner was crushed almost to death in the mines, if one gambler shot another gambler and did not kill him quite as dead as he should, this doctor had but the one great remedy for all, the earth. He would prop up a man in the warm, moist earth and keep him lying there, warm and moist and warm till he either died or got well, and I tell you that the more desperate cases came out all O.K. in Cariboo [more] than at any other place outside of Apalachicola.”

Uncle Johnny Fennessy treated this time and the Colonel went on but was very serious as he proceeded with the final account of his poor helpless, old friend Spruce for it would seem that he had become really attached to the dying man.

“Of course the doctor did not have room in his small hospital or earth deep enough for his final experiment and so as the warm weather had suddenly set in and there was plenty of deep and moist and warm earth up on a hill side half a mile above town and near the fragrant and pleasant pines, it was decided to try the experiment there. Of course there were plenty of boys eager to help. There was Jakey Williams who killed Rogers in Yreka and was himself killed by a greaser while Marshal in Idaho, and there was Dave English, hung at Lewiston. Alex Carter hung at Helena; Boone Helmer [Helm], hung at Spokane--all good fellows enough, you know, in their way, and willing to help the helpless chap. Well, we carried old Spruce up there under the pines on a litter one warm and pleasant twilight and laid him down there; for he was awful weak by this time, and we all knew pretty well that it would tax even dear, old mother earth to do much for him now. The doctor, who stood by the case to the last, came along with us; and as he and I followed along behind the litter, and a little out of the hearing of poor old Spruce, he told me that he could not live much longer as things were going on with him then. It was a desperate case, you see, and required a desperate remedy.”

“I think it was Boone Helmer that dug the pit. A great big handsome fellow from Texas, he was, with a neck like an Apolly--from which I suppose we have the classical word apoplexy, and probably apolonaris water. Damn bad to hang a man like that. However, he did some good; anyhow yes he did, and dug the pit deep and wide and roomy, so that when we stood poor old Spruce down in it up to his chin and held him up by his arms and shoulders as we sifted the warm soft earth in around him he was perfectly comfortable. He beckoned the doctor with his head to come to him. And when the doctor went up, and got down on his hands and knees to hear what he wanted to say, why old Spruce told him that he hadn't felt so comfortable since he came to

Cariboo.

“The doctor told us what he said, and then the sick man called the doctor down on his hands and knees again, and this time he told him to take the boys down to the saloon and treat them, and that as soon as the sap began to run in the spruce branches again, he would be up and out a-making of spruce beer and pay the bar-keep and the doctor too.

“Well, this pleased the boys mightily; not that they were so all-fired mean as to care for a treat, but they all wanted to see the man get well. They all felt a sort of responsibility about it for him, and when they filed past that queer little old head away down there in the ground, with the long gray beard, a wallowing in the warm earth they kind of sort of stopped like, as if they, maybe, wanted to shake hands. But, of course, they couldn't shake hands; for his hands were held straight down--away down, down in the deep, warm bosom of our dear old mother earth. So they all went on slowly and solemn like. Yes, it was sad. I--I--no more thank you Hare. I--I—I—”

But let us hasten on over this, for I find it grows too serious. The old Colonel coughed longer this time than usual, and it seemed that he would never quite get done turning his head away around and fooling with his handkerchief as if polishing that one glass in the gold rim of his spectacles. At last he went on slowly.

“The boys had their treat and then as the doctor went out, they all settled down to a poker game. The doctor told me he was going back to sit up with old Spruce and watch the progress of his case. And as the boys wanted one more at the poker game, and as there was a vacant place at the table for him, why, I--I sat down, and toward daylight I held four kings and an ace and Boone Helmer had a runnin flush. Now a runnin flush in Apalachicola—”

“But the man at Cariboo,” cried Hare.

“Yes, and the Caroboo too,” shrieked Whally.

“Did the man get well?” eagerly asked honest and sympathetic old Uncle John Fennessy.

Again the handkerchief, and again the prolonged cough and the Colonel, in a soft, low voice, finally went on.

“The doctor, it seems, was sent for to sew up a man’s bowels--been cut with a knife down at a dead-fall five miles below--and met the man coming after him just as he stepped out of the saloon where we sat at the little game.

“And was the experiment of curing cancer with earth really a success?” again urged Fennessy. Again the cough and the handkerchief, and at last, the colonel said sadly:

“Well, you see, Uncle John, we didn’t get to try it fully--didn’t get to give it a fair chance. Still I think, on my soul, if anything will or can cure a desperate case of cancer like that was, only the warm, soft mother earth can do it.”

“But the man? next morning? How was he?” almost shrieked the member from Shasta.

“Eaten off--gnawed right down in the ground to the shoulders!”

“What! What in——!” Whally had jumped up and brought his doubled fist down with a bang on the table till the empty tumblers bobbed and clinked and huddled up together as if they had been frightened almost to death. “What in hell, I say, could have done that?”

“Why, sah it was a dom Cariboo: When I was lost in Apalachicola——”

“Oh, curse Apalachicola, and your damned Cariboo and you too!”

And the Honorable John Wally (he is a member of the Oregon Senate now, I believe), whisked out of the saloon so fast that his coat tail was like a whip-cracker (The Wasp 26.1 (January 24, 1891): 15-16).

JM in Today’s World

Modern generations haven’t found JM’s tall tales but they are finding meaning and inspiration in his songs. His “Mothers of Men” appeared on the West Point Class of 2004 Memories Page (<http://www.west-point.org/family/mem2004/messages.html>

The bravest battle that ever was fought!
Shall I tell you where and when?
On the map of the world you will find it not,
Twas fought by the mothers of men.

Nay, not with cannon or battle shot,
With sword or nobler pen,
Nay, not with eloquent words or thought
From mouths of wonderful men;

But deep in the walled-up woman’s heart -
Of woman that would not yield,
But bravely, silently, bore her part -
Lo, there is the battle field!

No marshaling troup, no bivouac song,
No banner to gleam or wave,
But oh, these battles, they last so long -
From babyhood to the grave.

Yet, faithful as a bridge of stars,
She fights in walled-up town -
Fights on and on in the endless wars,
Then, silent, unseen, goes down.

Oh, ye with banner and battle shot,
And soldiers to shout and praise,
I tell you the kingliest victories fought
Were fought in those silent ways.

Oh, spotless in a world of shame,
With splendid and silent scorn,
Go back to God as pure as you came -
The kingliest warrior born!

Joaquin Miller (1837[40]-1913)

Thanks, Dennis Schreiner, for sending this.
Here’s to the mothers of all the men ... and women ...
of the class of 2004!

Now where did Vanished Arizona by Martha Summerhayes
(<http://jollyroger.com/library1/VanishedArizonabyMarthaSummerhayesebook.html>) find this?

THE MOJAVE DESERT
Thou white and dried-up sea! so old!
So strewn with wealth, so sown with gold!
Yes, thou art old and hoary white
With time and ruin of all things,
And on thy lonesome borders Night
Sits brooding o’er with drooping wings.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

One of our readers from French Gulch, CA sent us the following to brighten our Fourth of July: "Article in a 2002 Trinity Journal: 100 Years Ago- Saturday June 28, 1902.

Old Settlers Attention: We have been fortunate enough to secure the poet, Joaquin Miller, for the oration on the Fourth. It is to be hoped that all the Old Settlers, and Native Sons and Daughters of the County will avail themselves to meet this distinguished man. It will be the event of a lifetime. Preparations have been made to entertain all guests"

(Cindy Glacken, French Gulch, July 2, 2002).

Publications

MGK recently read the 1944 *Golden Tales of the Far West*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Company selected by May Lamberton Becker who gave good thumbnail introductions to all the authors, Joaquin Miller being her first selection. She gave his dates as 1841-1913 and wrote "I was born," said the Poet of the Sierras with a touch of poetic license, 'in a covered wagon pointed west.' " She excerpts p. 178-201 from his *Life Amongst the Modocs* and presents it under the title "The Man Hunt." Kudos to May Lamberton Becker who got the dates right and who could separate poetic license from fact.

Robert Chandler of S. F.'s Wells Fargo History Room sends us a nice Xerox copy of his latest acquisition: Pherne Miller's April 30, 1941 signed copy of her 1931 *The Joaquin Miller Cabin*. Beach Drive, Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C., Lansdale, Pennsylvania: Privately printed. Frank H. M. Klinge, n.p. #s. [Keepsake from the pherne-craft studio.] She gives her father's name as James H. B. Miller, dedicates the book to her uncle George Melvin Miller, and gives JM's birth date as November 10, 1841 but incorrectly has the family crossing The Plains over the Old Oregon Trail in 1854 when all records show 1852. If she was right about the birth date he would have been only going on eleven while crossing the plains and going on 13 when he arrived in California which would make his own accounts of his being a mere youth quite correct. But surely doesn't jibe with his Dec. 1855 entries (Selected Writings 1977: 147) which refer to his having just passed his "nin[e]teeth Christmas eve"

which would have had him born 1836, the year of his parents' marriage and before the birth of his elder brother John D. Miller.

Collector's Corner

Sometimes book dealers' descriptions add to our Miller Chronology, i. e. MILLER, Joaquin. *Songs of the Sierras*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871. 12mo, brown cloth decoratively stamped and lettered in gilt, top edge gilt. Front cover with slight smudging affecting the front paws of the bear, else fine. First edition. Inscribed by Miller on front free end paper and with corrections signed by him on page 278. With the signature of Lillie H. (Hitchcock) Coit dated October 4th, 1871 on half title. "From A Roman & Co." in pencil on title page. \$250.00 11457. Randall House at Santa Barbara, CA. They also had another copy @ \$150.00 (<http://www.randallhouserarebooks.com/lists/westam.html>).

Charcoal Sketches Series

A few copies of *Port Orford* (Vol. 1) and *Yreka* (Vol. 2) @ \$4.95 each (+\$1.25 s&h) and *Alaska and the Klondike* (Vol. 3) @ \$9.95 (+\$1.50 s&h) are still available.

*In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still...*
Joaquin Miller