
JOAQUIN MILLER

NEWSLETTER

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Happenings

The Shasta College Foundation celebration of the life and works of Joaquin Miller October 14-16, 2005 on Redding's Shasta College campus added new dimensions to our understanding of him and new ways to celebrate his contributions to our history and our lives.

Matt Root (*Wintu*) opened our conference with a tribal blessing in *Wintu*, unfortunately not recorded out of respect for tribal practices. Joaquin Miller would have felt quite at home. We hope to hear more from Matt and the work he is doing with *Wintu* language instruction and recovery of important *Nomtipom* (Sacramento River) sites. Matt has successfully regained some fishing rights for his family, some no doubt descendants of the very *Wintu* who taught Miller how to fish the Sacramento and McCloud Rivers.

First off, on opening night Patty Furnari's Stellar Charter school group, in period costume, presented a skit written by her and read by the students, which included Miller's poem *Columbus*. How wonderful to see and hear history and elocution being taught in the lower grades. Miller would have been delighted.

The second in a number of great surprises was a presentation about "Juanita" by Don Hislop who teaches at Shasta College but more importantly grew up in Oakland, California in the Grace Fountain house right across the street from Joaquin Miller's "Hights." Don's family was often invited to tea at a table always set for twelve by Juanita, who was living at the "Hights" after Miller's death. The newsletter hopes to hear more from him. Next day MGK got to overhear snippets of conversation between him and Stephanie Benavidez about exact locations in the park, like where Miller's mother was buried etc.

Next Dottie Smith, curator of the College

Museum and organizer of the conference, presented enlightening new information on the attempts of some soldiers in the Pit River area who were involved in trying to protect the Indians from the settlers ca. 1879 and who advocated a reservation in Fall River Valley. Another of those lost opportunities in history. It is to be hoped that Dottie organizes these letters collected by Richard Silva, a Siskiyou County historian, and publishes them so all will know that Joaquin Miller was not the only person trying to protect the Indians in those days.

Our second day opened with Daryl Babe Wilson (*Iss* and *Awte*) acknowledging in the audience Willard H. Rhoades and his sister as his aunt and uncle and further educating us on the history of his people living in the Pit River and Fall Valley area referenced by Dottie Smith on opening night. Also realizing that many of us had heard his story in Ashland last year of how reading Joaquin Miller had been a validating experience for him, he extemporized beautifully and answered questions.

Julie Cassidy from the Forest Service in Mt. Shasta followed with more clarification of the Miller facts gleaned from her historical and on the ground search of the sites in Miller's fiction *Life Amongst the Modocs*. Right now she is on a track to identify who and where from were the Indians whom Miller and Squire Gibson's group were routing from Castle Crags in 1855. History isn't clear. There were lots of audience questions and good discussion in this session.

A great lunch buffet was made available by the Shasta College Catering staff and everyone got to visit around with old friends and make new acquaintances.

My talk came after lunch and I was delighted to be assisted with the projector by my deceased husband's friend and fellow civil engineer Chuck Hornbeck. I retraced Miller's main route in Shasta County when he escaped from jail and which same

route he traveled when under the newspaper pseudonym "Martin" he supposedly went to Jim Brock's cabin just off of the Pit River to interview "Black Bart" after Bart's release from jail.

Then Ken Babbs, who was with Ken Kesey on that famous bus trip, presented a taste of the radio play his brother John Babbs wrote based on Miller's *Life Amongst...* and MGK was quite impressed with Ken's voice and has urged that he recite/read more Joaquin Miller wherever he can as he delivers Miller's work well. Ken also has a web site <http://www.skypilotclub.com/> and gave the conference a good write up there.

Bill Miesse returned us to the academic pursuit of Joaquin Miller with an additional look into his marvelous collection of quotes from much of Miller's work. Denis Freeman brought along a copy of his and Bill's new *Mount Shasta Fact Sheet*, and more on that later.

Stephanie Benavidez closed the conference for us with her wonderful insight into what is going on in Oakland's Joaquin Miller park today and of her efforts to keep it being what Miller wanted it to be "A Little Park for Little People." She has made a video that puts to shame the one made earlier by Huell Houser and gives us great pictures of children interacting and learning from the redwoods and other flora and fauna in the park.

Unfortunately, on the way home from the conference Stephanie's mother, Clarice, suffered a stroke but thankfully is slowly recovering. We are all looking forward to seeing her in 2007 hopefully at a conference in Joaquin Miller Park in Oakland.

Although Allen Rosenus couldn't be with us he sent autographed first editions of his *Selected Writings* 1976 to each presenter. MGK is particularly grateful for her copy as her paperback one is falling apart from over usage.

Saturday night we had a wonderful gab fest and social hour at the WinRiver Casino, co-sponsor with the Shasta College Foundation of the Joaquin Miller conference.

MGK not only repeated her presentation of Miller's story about Mary St. Clair but got to see and talk to old and new friends. Visiting with Mark McCormack and his attractive wife Valerie was a high point for MGK as Mark is a great, great, great grandson of Joaquin Miller and the only Miller

descendant MGK has ever met.

Sunday was evidently a great bus tour by all accounts as conferees visited Old Shasta and many heretofore unvisited Miller sites such as Sneaky Falls on Gilman Road where the old Indian trail on which Miller escaped turned north and went up to Matquaw Flat above where Miller was captured. Scott McKeown got some great shots for his forthcoming film and a great time was had by all.

Everyone went home filled with excitement and yet more unanswered questions about Joaquin Miller. Daryl Babe Wilson summed it up best in thoughts that came to him:

NAHOK, Maqak Cinehwu
(Autumn, Deer moon)

During the season of *Nahok*

In the land of the *Wintu*

We gathered to share knowledge,

Speaking to all and each other,

Speaking to the powers of the universe.

Maqak Cinehwu (deer moon, full moon)

looking full upon us.

Maqak Cinehwu looked into our hearts also

Searching for the proper place to plant
a dream

And so it was,

In the meadows of our hearts,

Cinehwu planted dreams

One for us each

So that we will not forget and always

remember our deepest thoughts

To speak truths and be good to

all people

And so it was that the dream caused sweeter sleep

And happier sunrise.

We departed knowing that a goodness was planted

there in our meadow

And that rain will water our dream and

rainbows will protect it.

Traveling in many directions, a thought came
from the wisdom of the Elders to cause world
to be better:

"When traveling across earth

Do not turn a leaf. Do not break a
branch."

And it was good.

Maqak Cinehwu smiled silver across *Nahok*.

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 DrBabeV@aol.com

Publications

Joaquin Miller research can now take off with a bang thanks to the appearance of Google Print.

Add it to your Favorites on your computer immediately. MGK is beginning the laborious task of adding it to Scott McKeown's nearly completed bibliography. Now we will have at our fingertips printable copy of many hard-to-find out-of-print books as well as references from all the new authors who are finding that they cannot write about nature or our Western history and our culture without starting with excerpts or references to Joaquin Miller who so often we find "said it first."

MGK has also found on another site <http://www.heritagepursuit.com/Licking/LickingIndex.htm> - which site needs your support - and which site gives us quotes from some interesting proems provided by Miller for the 1881 *History of Licking Co. O.* compiled by N.N. Hill Jr. published by A.A. Graham of Newark, Ohio in 1881 where the section about Mounds and Mound Builders began with Miller's proem (or did Miller lift this from somewhere else in his work?):

"What is there new atop of this old world?
 Should e'er I come to write your books, why I
 Would search among the quaint and dusty tombs
 While the selfish world sought pleasure and repose."

And in another section also referring to mounds:

"Go cross their wilds as I have done,
 From snowy crest to sleeping vales,
 And you will find on every one
 Enough to swell a thousand tales."

And from the Nature and Indian section:

"Alone on this desolate border,
 On this ruggedest rimm'd frontier,
 Where the hills huddle up in disorder,
 Like a fold in mortal fear;
 Where the mountains are out at the elbow
 In their yellow coats, seedy and sere,

Where the river runs sullen and yellow,
 Through all the days of the year."

And in the chapter about "..., Newark Township and City" his proem read:

"And so I have said, and I say it over,
 And can prove it over and over again,
 That the four-footed beasts on the red-crowned
 clover,

The pied and homed beasts of the plain
 That lie down, rise up, and repose again,
 And do never take care, or toil, or spin,
 Nor buy, nor build, nor gather in gold,
 Though the days go out and the tides come in,
 Are better than we by a thousand-fold;
 For what is it all, in the words of fire,
 But a vexing of soul and a vain desire?"

And from the legal section:

"What! lie down, and be rode upon rough-shod?
 No! fare and fight, and be at least respected."

And from the Hopewell Township Section, and the Nature and Indian section::

"Alone on this desolate border,
 On this ruggedest rimm'd frontier,
 Where the hills huddle up in disorder,
 Like a fold in mortal fear;
 Where the mountains are out at the elbow
 In their yellow coats, seedy and sere,
 Where the river runs sullen and yellow,
 Through all the days of the year."

And from a church section:

"Where dusky savage wooed his dusky mate,
 And through the forest rang his battle cry,
 Now stands the arched and templed halls of State,
 And gilded steeples pointing to the sky."

-Joaquin Miller.

Research

Dennis Freeman brought to the conference a copy of the 1840 census which proved that Hulings Miller and Margaret Witt had then (summer of 1840) in their household two male children under the age of five, and we know that Hulings Miller was married to

Margaret Witt in 1836 and a second obituary now confirms that John D. was their first child and that Joaquin was their second child. In the normal order of things John D. would have been born in 1837 and since women normally nursed two years to prevent a pregnancy it is rather obvious that Joaquin couldn't have been born before 1839 at the earliest. At various times his birth date has been given as 1840 and or 1841. 1840 was given at the time of his divorce. One might still want to vacillate between 1840 and 1841 but it is absolutely impossible for him to have been born in 1837, the Library of Congress or any other history book notwithstanding.

And from the Samuel Asahel Clarke Scrapbook 226A of the Oregon Historical Society we have another obit. for Hulings Miller probably written for the *Willamette Farmer* which confirms the date of Feb. 2 [1883] and differs only in arrangement of details. Note the name is spelled Hulins and Clarke and Hulins were good friends.

Death of Hulins Miller

Hulins Miller died, at his residence on the north side of the McKensie river, in Lane county, about ten miles north [Clarke got the direction right] of Eugene City, Friday, Feb. 2, from injuries received a few weeks ago when he was thrown out of a wagon by his team running away. Mr. Miller was one of the earliest and most highly respected citizens of this county.

He came from the State of Indiana to Oregon Territory at an early day, about the year 1853, [1852] if we are not mistaken. His children were educated here. His eldest son John D. Miller. (*emphasis added*) went east and married and resided a number of years in Easton Pa., where he died about ten years ago. His only daughter, Ella, married John Luckey, and died in Eugene City just before the death of John. His other children are living. "Joaquin," the poet is in the Atlantic States, and James and Geo. M. Miller are here. Deceased leaves a wife and three sons above named and a wide circle of friends and acquaintances to cherish his memory. The remains were interred last Sunday near the family residence."

But still our quandary over Miller's birth date continues. Dennis Freeman writes to MGK:

"I may have answered my own question.

The Library of Congress usually uses standard, authoritative, reference sources for biographical data that is applied to the name authority record for an author. I found that the two main references used for Miller were the *Dictionary of American Biography* and *Who Was Who in America Volume I 1897-1942*. Strangely, neither source gives JM's birth date as 1837.

The Dictionary of American Biography (DAB), Vol. 6, p. 621-622 gives Miller's birth date as March 10, 1839. Among the list of references to the DAB article is Martin S. Peterson and his Univ. of Nebraska doctoral thesis on Miller. In his published work, *Joaquin Miller: Literary Frontiersman*, Peterson gives several references for the March 10, 1839 date (p. 10). while *Who Was Who in America Volume I 1897-1942*, p. 840, gives Miller's birth date as November 10, 1841, but with no sources for the information. This article also says that JM "...removed with parents to Ore., 1850" rather than 1852 which later date is correct.

I am still unclear about how L of C decided to use 1837. Typo?"

(Dennis further queries MGK):

"Are you in favor of the March 10, 1839 date?"

MGK has never been in favor of anything. I have always sought to find out the hard core facts and go with the latest revealed corroborating data. Not an easy task, when dealing with Miller research. So please everyone weigh in with your birth date suggestions. Soon we will be publishing in the newsletter and on Scott McKeown's website a genealogical record for Joaquin Miller with all the facts as we know them or can prove them today.

We are encouraged in this by William Miesse's most recent publication *Mount Shasta Fact Sheet*. Intro, by Dennis Freeman. College of the Siskiyou Library (21 June 2005) 4pp. p. 2 "TimeLine of Historical Events, 1854 and 1873, and p. 3 "Mount Shasta as Inspiration." (See <http://www.siskiyou.edu/library/shasta/factsheet/> for References and Inquiries.) These four pages answer with finality all those hard to solve dilemmas like "How high is Mt. Shasta?" and "Can you see the ocean from Mt. Shasta?" Miesse got all the references "to" and quotes "from" Miller "right on."

There probably won't be time for another newsletter before Christmas but Season's Greetings

to all of you and may 2006 be the best and most expository Joaquin Miller year ever. MGK

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