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JOAQUIN MILLER HOME

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JOAQUIN MILLER HOME

Joaquin Miller made his home, for more than a quarter of a century on "The Hights", in the Contra Costa foothills, east of Oakland. There much of what was eventually considered his best and most lasting work was done. In large measure, that home grew to reflect the poet's unique personality and became, with the years, as individual as, his own mental stature.

When he bought the property, in the late 1880's, it was barren of trees. It had furnished lumber for the building of many homes, in Oakland and San Francisco, and fuel for many more. The thousands of trees, which later covered these hills were of Joaquin Miller's planting, year after year; many with his own hands, many that he regarded as "intimate friends," watering and tending them, watching them grow. He once said, "If consulting my own comfort, I would have no man or woman near me, who did not love and have daily intercourse with trees and flowers."

In his "Literary Nomad" annals, Hamlin Garland tells of his first visit (1892) to The Hights.[1] In the

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1. H. Garland, "Roadside Meetings of a Literary Nomad," V, in Bookman, LXX, 625-628.

Oakland directory he had found "C. H. Miller, Fruitgrower, residence on the Heights", but repeated inquiry failed of any further information. He took the horse car going farthest east and when that came to the end of its tracks, started toward the Contra Costa hills on foot, with only Miller's own lines to guide him:

> Be my reward some little place to pitch my tent,
> some tree and vine
> Where I may sit with lifted face and drink the
> sun as drinking wine.

and came at last to a log cabin, which he recognized at once from various references to it in Miller's writings; then more cabins on a hillside terraced for fruit trees, roses, fish ponds; in the distance a team plowing. Mrs. Margaret Miller, Joaquin's mother, made him welcome until Joaquin himself came trudging up the road in his picturesque attire, and with his usual "Boy! I'm glad to see you!" carried Garland off to his later-built cabin, "The Abbey," described as "a workshop...like a camp - the camp of a man of letters." Bear skins and wolf skins covered the chairs, and as rugs, covered the floor. "In this one, I sleep and work," Miller told his guest; other cabins were at the disposal of friends and visitors. "With my own hands I led the water down from the canyon; I terraced the hillsides, built stone walls, planted orchards of olive and walnut trees....I have a mile of roses...." Garland says: "He impressed me as a frank simple soul of great strength...reminded me of Whitman,

though sterner and less patriarchal....The longer I studied him the more elemental and admirable he became, and yet I saw how easily he could be misunderstood and caricatured."

They had supper in the tent-like dining room of Mrs. Miller's cabin, where Joaquin served in quiet hospitality, as they talked of "the great new world of liberty and equality" that he confidently saw coming in the near future. Later, wrapping themselves in bearskins against the cool air,that crept up from the bay after the sun went down, they talked on of art and literature and altruistic living while shadow settled in the valleys below and the light was lifted from the sea. Then, as the lights of the city at the foot of the hills bloomed golden and sapphire, they watched the scene silently. Garland wrote:

> It was too beautiful for words...The impression made upon me by this dreamer was very strong, and when I gripped his hand in goodbye it was with that vague pain of parting which we feel at times when we take leave of men and women of kin nearer than blood relation, brothers and sisters in the deep currents of common thought and common action.

Miller's customary direction, when asked how his home could be reached from Oakland, "Three miles east and one mile perpendicular," was almost literally descriptive of the then necessary journey. Yet thousands made the pilgrimage year after year during his lifetime. And large numbers still do, but the traveler can now go by car and

bus almost to the gateway of "The Abbey." From that point some fourteen towns and cities can be seen north and south of the Golden Gate, around the wide expanse of the bay, and the yet wider "sundown seas." It was there that Miller wrote, in "Juanita" - a poem dedicated to his little ten-year-old daughter:

Steep below me lies the valley, deep below
me lies the town,
Where great sea-ships ride and rally, and
the world walks up and down.
Oh, the sea of lights far streaming when the
thousand flags are furled--
When the gleaming bay lies dreaming, as it
duplicates the world.

At "The Hights" in 1892, he wrote "Columbus," which the London Atheneum considered "the best American poem." Of the closing lines of the last two stanzas it was said: "The English language does not contain in poetical imagination any lines surpassing these in beauty and power:"

What shall we do when hope is gone?
The words leapt like a leaping sword:
Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!

He gained a world, he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: On! Sail on!

For years this poem was read and quoted and acclaimed "by practically everyone, who could read and speak English."

When Elbert Hubbard visited Miller, in 1893, and wrote one of his famous "Little Journeys" about it, he recorded that "we took the street car to the end of the line and then the conductor pointed to the road that led up the

hill....'Take that road and sail on,' he said, and smiled in a way that indicated he had sprung the same allusion before and was pleased with it."[2]

Joaquin Miller was not temperamentally "one with the crowd." His choice of the isolated hill for a home site was expressive of an essential element in his nature, significant of one of the deeper phases of his many-sided personality. To the little chapel-like cabin which he called The Abbey (partly in quaint, oblique reference to his wife's name, Abbie Leland), his more intimate friends were welcomed, but the "guest-cabin" was one of the first built on The Hights. Its door "stood open to all the world," and still more inclusive provision was made for any number who might want to stay a night - or a year. And yet, despite all the colonies and barbecues and "reunions" those acres have known, there is today, even with the city steadily climbing the eastern hills and a notable highway, the Joaquin Miller Boulevard, passing the entrance to The Hights, a sense of withdrawal about this place. Mementos of many experiences, phases of Miller's seventy-two years of wide-ranging and vivid life, are at "The Hights" today. A glance at those earliest years, before this hill became

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2. E. Hubbard, A little journey to the home of Joaquin Miller, 1-16.

his home, is interpretive of the home itself.

Miller's own humorous reference to having been "born in a covered wagon headed westward" was not far from literal fact, for though his birthplace was a cottage near Liberty, Indiana (November 10, 1841),[3] he was still in the toddling stage when his parents, Margaret and Hulings Miller, began their long and often interrupted pilgrimage to the coast; a covered wagon was his cradle, and he slept and dreamed to the rhythmic swing of an ox-team plodding across untamed stretches of valley and plain.

Hulings Miller - farmer, store keeper, school teacher, pioneer - was of Scotch Quaker descent, and though a rifle was part of his overland trail equipment, it was said that he had never used it except in hunting. Margaret (Witt) Miller was of Dutch ancestry. Cincinnatus Heine (Hiner) Miller[4] was the name given the baby son who arrived in November, 1841. That middle name has been a matter of

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3. Juanita Miller, About The Hights, a brief history of Joaquin Miller; J. S. Richards, Bibliographical materials, 1-15. There is some indication that 1837 was the year of Miller's birth.
4. Miller. About the Hights, a brief history of Joaquin Miller. Juanita Miller, Joaquin Miller's daughter, is authority for the facts that follow, on her father's middle name. She is adding these facts - as told to her by her grandmother, Margaret Miller - to the new edition of her Brief History.

considerable dispute. Joaquin Miller's daughter, Juanita, still living at "The Hights" (1936) says, that his mother gave him the name of Heine, because she liked the work of the German poet, Heine. She greatly valued the little volumne, of Heine's poems, a friend had given her and that went with her, on all her travels. She had often expressed a wish that one of her sons might be a poet.

Dr. Hiner, a pioneer dentist, the only "doctor" available when Joaquin Miller was born in the little town of Liberty, Indiana, had probably never heard of Heine, and assumed that the new baby's middle name was the same as his own surname. Margaret Miller was too tender-hearted to deny him this small satisfaction. Later, when tales of the young man's life in the West and sudden fame in Europe became news in Indiana, Dr. Hiner and his friends clung tenaciously to their legend. Joaquin Miller's reply to inquiries on this point invariably was that he did not "give a hang" which name had been given him; "H" was the only part of it he ever used, and that only when it became a legal necessity. Of his first name - Cincinnatus, bestowed upon him because of some whimsical association his father had with years spent in Cincinnati, Ohio - "Nat" was the only syllable retained.

The Millers were more than ten years on their gradual westward trek, and for a considerable part of that time, even when the little caravan halted for some nonths, covered

wagons were still their necessary habitat until they eventually reached Eugene, Oregon, in the early 1850's. Nat was then in his early 'teens, the keen-for-adventure age. He promptly ran away from home and for several years lived a roving life - part of the time with Mountain Joe (Joe De Bloney, graduate of Heidelberg, and for a considerable time one of Fremont's men)[5] who was at that time engaged in driving herds of half-wild young horses from Mexico to Oregon and elsewhere, more than once crossing Arizona and the Colorado desert. During these "days in the saddle and nights reading by camp fires", Miller gathered much of the material, he later used in poems and plays. It was on one of these journeys, that the boy first saw the Contra Costa hills, where he later made his home. Mountain Joe told him, their camp was pitched near a spring, where Fremont had camped when making the observations embodied in his government report of 1847[6] and that it was Fremont, who first gave to the harbor entrance, the name of Golden Gate. That the artist Bierstadt was commissioned, years later, by General Fremont - then living in the East - to paint a view of the bay at

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5. Miller, About The Hights, a brief history of Joaquin Miller; W. D. Armes, "Joaquin Miller and his Work," in the University of California Chronicle, XV, 357-364.
6. W. D. Armes, "Joaquin Miller and his Work," in the University of California Chronicle, XV, 357-364.

sunset as seen from the Contra Costa hills (as well as Miller's subsequent correspondence with Mrs. Fremont on this subject, after her husband's death) confirmed the poet in his conviction that the spring on his "precipitous acres" had indeed been the site of Fremont's camp. Miller's early enthusiasm for the "Pathfinder" became a life-long hero worship and inspired him, some twenty or thirty years later, to build a monument in memory of the camp site - still a treasured landmark in the grounds.

Not all Nat's years with Mountain Joe were literally wander years. For a time the two kept a sort of roadhouse - a rough, big cabin they had built - to accommodate travelers on the trail from Oregon to Northern California. Another considerable part of those years was spent with different tribes of Indians - around Mt. Shasta, along Pit River, inthe Sierras. For some months, also, the boy worked as cook in mining camps - "I cooked all winter for twenty-seven men, and every one of them was alive in the spring!" he boasted.

His defense of Indian rights was so outspoken, that sometimes he was called a "white renegade." In his later voluminous writings on his Indian experiences, he says: "Such honesty I never knew, as I found here...all the time of my absence this cabin full of provisions had remained untouched ....I believe that the last Indian would have starved to

death rather than have touched a crumb without my permission...." Occasionally he was drawn into some altercation against Indians, but only when convinced that justice demanded it. Years later he wrote:

> The archives of the State will show that, twice badly shot, I served through the Pit River war and am the only one that never accepted any pay...this is some satisfaction - to have disdained pay for fighting - yet it had been ten-fold nobler not to have fought at all.

There were stories of "borrowed" horses, during those adventurous years. From a man for whom young Nat had worked for some time, but who had failed to make any payments, a horse was "borrowed" to make a necessary journey and later, to complete the expedition, was exchanged en route for a fresh mount, "borrowed" from a ranchman, who complained to the local sheriff. Throughout his lifetime numerous wild stories were current with the uninformed. He laughed at them. "Time will straighten it all out," he would say, "my brother is in possession of the facts. He will tell the truth some day...."

After a trip to South America, young Miller returned to his parents' home, graduated at Columbia College (now Oregon State University at Eugene), studied law, and in 1861 was admitted to the bar. For a time Miller practiced law in Canyon City, and later, was elected judge of Grant County - when it comprised more than a third of the

whole state and where he "maintained order for years with one law book and two six-shooters."

In the early 1860's, Miller married Miss Minnie Myrtle Dyer of Ports Orford. His first book, Specimens, by C. H. Miller, was printed in 1867; then Joaquin Et Al, by Cincinnatus H. Miller in 1868. His wife left Canyon City, declaring that he was writing unprofitable poetry instead of attending to business, and sued for divorce.

In 1862, Miller and Isaac Mossman had started a pony express between Millersburg, Idaho, and Walla Walla, Washington. A generation later, Mossman - "a rough, queer little man" - then penniless and ill, sought out his one-time partner, established on "The Hights" and widely famous. He was given a generous welcome and for a long time shared Joaquin Miller's purse and home. For a short time after the pony express partnership was dissolved, Miller owned and edited the Eugene City Review. He lived on the southeast corner of what is now Fifth and Oak streets, the town then being little more than an outpost settlement. Because of Miller's outspoken sympathy with the Southern Confederacy, his Review was soon denied use of the mails.

Many of Miller's most stirring poems were based on his early adventures - tales of the Mexican brigand, Murietta, for whom Miller had once made a legal defence, and of Walker filibustering in Nicaragua. When asked directly if

he had actually fought with Walker, Miller countered with: "Was Milton over actually in hell?" While with Mountain Joe, Miller spent some time on the Mexican coast in the 1850's when Walker was recruiting men to establish his independent republic; he knew Walker personally and greatly admired him. Enthusiasm born of close contact inspired the lines:

> He was a brick...true as God's north star
> And brave as Yuba's grizzlies are...

and as George Sterling put it: "Who would not gladly exchange a mess of mere factual pottage for birthright in that unforgettable poem.... Who would want to grub for opaque facts in the glowing pages of transmuted history?" It was in the transmutation of his own experiences that much of Miller's best work had its source - as the afterglow on Mt. Shasta, first seen in those keenly observant, sensitive wandering years of boyhood, was interpreted in later life in his Autograph of God.

Some time after he had been established on "The Hights," Miller was asked by a San Francisco newspaper to write a story about Chris Evans, the notorious train robber and bandit of Sontag and Evans fame. Evans was then thought to be hiding in the Sierras between Mt. Whitney and the foothills. Miller made a great "interview" of the assignment, giving accurate descriptions of the

locality and sympathetic talks with Mrs. Evans and the daughters. To questioning as to whether he had actually cornered the outlaw for a social chat, his replies were about as enlightening as his previous reference, to Milton's experience in Hades. But after Evans had been captured and given a life sentence in Folsom prison, Miller invited the Evans family to make The Hights their home.

The poet was an inveterate champion of all "underdogs," the slandered, dishonored, outlawed. "When Murietta was hounded, captured, and cruelly slain," wrote George Wharton James, Miller's lifelong friend, "Miller's poem in defense of him brought derision, scorn, contumely upon himself." It did so at the time, but later contributed appreciably to his renown.

Until he met Ina Coolbrith in San Francisco, in 1870, on his way to Europe, Miller's printed work had received very little notice and practically no encouragement. Bret Harte had failed to discover a trace of genius in any of it. Even Miss Coolbrith had not found such value as did England a few months later, though her review of Joaquin Et Al in the Overland Monthly was sympathetically appreciative of its rhythm and imagery. It was she, who suggested his adopted name of Joaquin, as more characteristic of his picturesque personality and career. And thereafter, except in deeds, copyrights, etc., Cincinnatus H. ceased to exist.

Just before leaving for Europe, Miller visited his parents and found them in financial difficulties. His father had signed a thousand-dollar note for a "friend" and had been obliged to pay it all. The little farm was heavily mortgaged and they were in danger of losing their home. "Why did you do it," the son could not help asking. "He was in great need of help?" was the father's reply - that seemed to Nat sufficient reason for his paying off the mortgage - with almost the last dollar he owned at that time. He arrived in London not only without friends, but practically without money. But "he arrived with a bang," as Merritt Parmelee Allen put it. She described his reception:[7]

> The cub of the Sierras found himself a lion...the literary hero of the day. Indian Joe's boy was now the friend of Tennyson, Browning, Gladstone, the Prince of Wales and Queen Victoria.... Within two years he became the most talked about man of letters in the English speaking world.... He strolled about London in red flannel shirt and high boots telling...yarns about Indians and buffalo...yet in spite of his bluster and swagger he remained at heart a humble admirer of his own country...England and Europe had made him popular beyond all expectation, but he could not rest there. The glitter and elegance of castles and courts tickled his vanity but the plains and the mountains called him home.

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7. M. P. Allen, Joaquin Miller, frontier poet, 156-162.

He returned to America for a time and then went to Europe for several years, traveling, lecturing and writing, living a strenuous and interesting life. When he came home, he settled in New York to be near his publishers and to edit a newspaper column. Many of his poems and plays date from that time. In New York, he married Miss Abbie Leland, a woman of wealth and social position.

Joaquin Miller was then over forty. His inherent love of change, and perhaps nostalgia for western scenes, impelled him to move to Washington and build there a replica of the "lost cabin," on Meridian Hill, fitting it up with elk horns, skins and Indian souvenirs. "Then he sent for his wife and when she arrived her pile of trunks was larger than the cabin. She returned to New York and he stayed on, becoming a curiosity to sightseers."[8] In 1912, the California State Association moved the cabin to Rock Creek Park and presented it to the United States as a memorial to Miller, much to his satisfaction. Since his death, memorial services have been held there annually by the Association.

Charles Dudley Warner wrote of Miller's London successes:[9]

> The appearance of Songs of the Sierras made a great stir in England, and Mr.

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8. Allen, Joaquin Miller, frontier poet, 156-162.
9. C. D. Warner, World's best literature, XVII, 10027-10028.

> Miller was feted and lauded with superlative adjectives and epithets, culminating in the illustrious title of the American Byron....Mr. Miller's chief claim to literary fame rests upon his originality, freshness of style, and vigor of thought and expression. In the sweeping rush of his rhythm there is a suggestion of the roaring streams and swaying forests whose music he had heard in his youth.

Stuart P. Sherman wrote of him as "a pathfinder of the imagination....like Whitman he blazed a way into new territories."

In 1873, Joaquin Miller's father died, and as soon as he had acquired The Hights as a permanent home, he took his mother there, and there she spent the remainder of her life. George Sterling wrote:

> His devotion to her was beautiful and profound...He left nothing undone within his power to make happier her quiet existence, and was at her side at many moments of the day or night. Her word with him was actually law, I think, and a large portion of his life was based on her taste or needs.

Miller often referred to his mother's admonition: "If you ever find yourself getting popular, come home and let me know what you have been doing." And not infrequently he would add, soberly: "Popularity means mediocrity." Yet - another of his amusing inconsistencies - he found an almost childlike satisfaction in many evidences of the esteem in which much of his later life was passed. Another of Miller's temperamental cross currents was his aversion

to taking money, for his poems, though he was business-like in exacting as substantial payments as possible, for his prose work. Prose, for him, was literally "hard labor"; poetry was "just singing, like the birds." Stuart P. Sherman wrote:[10]

> Pilgrims to The Hights found an interesting element of inconsistency between the ...humanitarianism which Miller had gradually adopted as his religion and his strongest poetical impulses, which were adventurous and imperialistic...the fire of the fighting youth slumbered in the veins of the bearded seer, but it was never extinguished.

It was this youthful thirst for adventure that - though he was already in sight of his threescore milestone - lured him to the Klondike in 1897, when gold was discovered there. The mines, he located there, proved of no value and practically his only financial returns were from his later lecture series, on the adventure. When delivering these, he wore a complete fur outfit with large gold nuggets, which he had obtained in Alaska, as buttons.

Alternating with expeditions to far horizons were the fruitful years on "The Hights." There, the early hours of the day were reserved for his writing, the afternoons for physical labor - "planting trees, building monuments for his inveterate hero-worship - monuments to Moses, Fremont, Browning - and doing everything else that came into his head,

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10. S. P. Sherman, The poetical works of Joaquin Miller, 35-39.

practical and impractical." When asked why he had singled out Moses for special local honor, Miller explained:

> That man had quality. Though he had been brought up as a prince, his heart was with the downtrodden. He made short work, you remember, of that Egyptian who was trying to put something over on an Israelite. And all the laws he made were sensible, practical. We are told God was his undertaker and no one knows where he was buried. But I have come to believe it was, likely as not, right here on this hill - just where I've piled these stones for his monument. Anyhow, so far, this assumption of mine has never been disproved, and I doubt that it ever will be. I confidently expect to meet Moses in Elysium some day - he's our kind, all right!

Evenings at "The Hights" were given over to "play and good fellowship," usually out of doors, sitting under the stars, "up there on the hillside where the stars seemed so near." There were memorable barbecues in Redwood Canyon, when scores of guests both invited and uninvited "lounged on the hillsides," reverted to fingers in the absence of knives and forks and "took time to remember that we, too, are living on a star and star-adventures are our birthright." Miller was a raconteur, but a good listener at his own table, drawing out his guests to talk freely and well. A story he told with particular gusto is recalled by one who used frequently to be at those happy gatherings. Miller was in Paris during the siege of 1870 and was often invited to dine at the American embassy where E. B. Washburn,

of Illinois, was ambassador. Food was scarce and all sorts of non-food substitutes were resorted to; luxuries were practically unknown. On one day they were served with chicken pie - "it looked like chicken pie," Miller would say, "it tasted like chicken pie - I'll give anybody a dollar who can guess what that dish really was!" After wild conjectures including horse meat, rats, and cats, he would say, "It was chicken pie!"

Ambrose Bierce, George Sterling, John P. Irish, Benjamin Fay Mills, J. H. E. Partington, Herman Whitaker, George Wharton James, Ina Coolbrith, and scores of other writers and thinkers from far and near gathered there on barbecue occasions "and sometimes forgot to go home."

There were always a number of resident guests at The Hights. Gertrude Boyle, the well-known sculptress, who married Kano, the Japanese philosopher and poet, occupied a cabin there for years with her husband. Among her best work were busts of the poet and his mother. Yone Noguchi, another Nipponese poet - later instructor in English at the University of Tokyo - was long a tenant there and a fellow worker with Joaquin Miller in both literary and physical labors. Miller had many close friends among the Japanese, and when Edwin Arnold (author of "Light of Asia") was harshly criticized for having married a Japanese, his American colleague was the first to give him welcome, when he

stopped in San Francisco, on his way to London.

Herbert Bashford, at that time a struggling young poet - librarian of the city of Tacoma and later state librarian of Washington and for some time literary editor of The Bulletin - came to California for the express purpose of living near Joaquin Miller, whose work he greatly admired, and who had been his guest for some time in Tacoma. That visit was the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

The Civil War veteran, A. W. Darling - whose wife, Isabel Darling, was a well-known writer - purchased several acres on The Hights, built a comfortable home, and for years acted as foreman or manager for the poet. Speaking of their joint efforts, Miller once said, "Posterity may not appreciate our having made two blades of grass grow here where only one grew before, but the cows will!"

Groups of students from the University of California, located in Berkeley, spent week ends frequently at The Hights, sleeping in the open, scout fashion, on beds of pine needles. "There is hardly an acre of those eighty that Miller called home," a member of those week-end parties said recently, "that is not like an open book to us old-timers, despite the fires that have swept the hills and the many changes the years have wrought - a book of youth. Part of Miller's genius was his understanding and inspiration of young people, his faculty for creating an atmosphere of youth

even among his contemporaries, even after his own hair was white." "Hallmarks of those happy days" are still to be found on the "tawny slopes" - the old stile, the little foot bridge, the (once) rose-lined arroyo, acacias, olives, sequoias, planted in memory of some "milestone of fellowship" such as reunions of the Sequoia Club and other organizations there.

Edwin Markham selected a building site at The Hights, but did not carry out his intention of making a home there, though he lived nearby during the years, he taught school, in Oakland before moving to New York. Of his first visit to this colleague of whom he often spoke as "our gray eagle of song," and "our chanting poet with craggy brow and flowing beard," Markham wrote:[11]

> I was a son of Oregon pioneers and so was he...so we were brothers at once and brothers to the end...Miller was an ideal neighbor and our meetings back and forth were frequent and most friendly....In all the years I knew him I never heard him say a bitter word of any human being. He always leaned to mercy and always lent a hand.

Planting trees and writing poems about them were among Joaquin Miller's chief joys, on The Hights. And much of his prose work, in those days, was directed to instilling in others an appreciation of trees, as more than mere timber.

In August, 1886, Miller inaugurated a vigorous cam-

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11. E. Markham, California the wonderful, 337-341.

campaign for a State Arbor Day, applying to the government for permission to begin reforestation on Goat Island, then wholly barren of trees. From the first, he had the enthusiastic support of John P. Irish - editor of Alta California - and of Adolph Sutro (later mayor of San Francisco and who had established Sutro Heights and planted Sutro Forest). Newspapers gave publicity to the enterprise, public schools made the day then selected, November 27, a general holiday. Senator Perkins provided transportation for the school children and their trees to the island; George Hearst, James G. Fair and others contributed funds, Adolph Sutro donated a large number of seedling evergreens. Many thousands gathered there; the ceremonies were impressive and the day's activities an outstanding event. Popular demand was made to rechristen the island, in honor of the founder of its Arbor Day, but Miller steadily refused to permit this and urged return to the original, name of Yerba Buena.

There were frequent tree-planting "bees" on The Hights also, though of course on a much smaller scale. Ina Coolbrith participated, in the island planting and in many of those on the "home hill." It has been said: The friendship between Ina Coolbrith and Joaquin Miller was as natural and impersonal as the comradeship of two forest trees; their affinity was in their genius, their common sources of inspiration. Miller was a poets' poet; his colleagues

sought him out.

During one of the various lecture series Joaquin Miller gave in the South and East, he met James Whitcomb Riley and a close friendship was formed between the two. After a lecture given at the University of Cincinnati, an old man pressed forward eagerly to see the speaker - Weber, the artist, whose work was already among the art treasures of Europe. "Joaquin, I must paint you!" he insisted, adding "I have never seen a more divinely inspired face than yours just now as you talked of 'the treasures of the snow'!" The poet cancelled all his dates for the next two weeks and went daily to Weber's studio; the portrait then made became the property of the University of Cincinnati.

Miller greatly enjoyed his informal talks to the students at Stanford University. David Starr Jordan was a close friend and the poet was always his personal guest during the series there.

One of Joaquin Miller's later appearances in San Francisco (under the auspices of the Camera Club) was at the old Metropolitan Temple on Fifth Street. The introductory remarks of the chairman of the evening, evidently a novice in that role, were indifferent and uninspiring. At their conclusion, he retreated abruptly with his back to the audience. Miller turned, eyed him for an instant in apparent amusement, and then called after him: "If you never come

back, write to me!" The audience of more than two thousand roared with delight, and "he had them in the hollow of his hand the rest of that evening."

Joaquin Miller was always generous, in response to the numerous requests, made of him by local clubs and other organizations, to read and interpret his own poems. His final platform appearance was at a theater in Berkeley in 1911, when he recited his "Columbus" before that audience, the last words that many who had long known him ever heard from his lips.

Miller gloried in his strength. At seventy, he had the vigor and endurance of fifty. He had often said: "When I die I want to fall prostrate like the giant sequoias I have loved." But his passing was not in this wise. While at work at The Hights, he fell and injured his back in such a way as to induce uremic poisoning. For months he lay in historic Fabiola Hospital; for the remainder of a weary and painful two years, in his cabin on The Hights. His wife and daughter came at once, from the East, and were in constant attendance upon him, as long as he lived. His death occurred February 17, 1913. In the words of a colleague, "The death of this poet was more than an incident, more than an event; it was an epoch - the passing of the last of that group in which were Lowell, Whittier, Whitman, Longfellow, Bryant, Bret Harte."

It had been Miller's repeated request, that his body be cremated on the funeral pyre, he had built with his own hands on The Hights, and near the base of which his mother (who died of pneumonia at the age of ninety-two), Maud Miller McCoy, his duaghter by his first wife, and several friends were buried. Because of a city ordinance in force in 1913, actual cremation at The Hights was not possible, but his ashes were scattered there at a memorial service in which many friends took part - John P. Irish, Charles K. Field, members of the Bohemian Club and other groups. One of the latter, speaking with affection and understanding, referred to the poet as "both strong and weak, wise and unwise, a very human man and very lovable, who filled an unique place in the years and the humanity, which he helped to fashion and on which, he has left a lasting impression.

In 1919, "The Hights" was purchased by the city of Oakland. A small home site is reserved by Mrs. Miller and her daughter, for the duration of their lives. The remainder, some sixty-seven acres, constitutes Joaquin Miller Park. It directly adjoins Sequoia Park above Dimond Canyon. In September, 1928, the Historical Landmark Committee, of the Native Sons of the Golden West, placed a memorial tablet to Joaquin Miller near the cabin, in which he had lived and worked.

In cooperation, with a committee of the California Writers Club and others, the Oakland Park Department is

carrying out an extensive landscaping design, on the hill which constitutes the major part, of Joaquin Miller Park. The idea originated with members, of the League of Western Writers, but was later taken over by the other organizations. Mrs. Frank Mott, Professor Derrick N. Lehmer, Mrs. Eunice Mitchell Lehmer, Harry Noyes Pratt, Charles Keeler and a number of other writers were on the sponsoring committee.

A memorial temple will crown the crest, of the hill and in it will be housed portraits, busts, original manuscripts, first editions and other mementos of California writers. Below the building, a natural hollow in the slope is in process of grading and shaping for an outdoor theater. Reflecting the lights of this theater's broad stage, a large pool will be so placed that water from it will descend in twin falls on either side of the slope, broken by occasional small pools. In their entirety the two streams will parallel two stone stairways, some thirty feet in width, from the crest of the hill to its base. In addition to these stairs, the design includes informal "zig zag" rustic pathways and trails. They will wind in very gradual ascent around the hillside, broken frequently (as also the stone stairways will be) by landings and level stretches with shaded seats. Those points command fine panoramic views of the surrounding country.

The completed work will be known as Woodminster Memorial Grove. A number of trees have already been dedicated

to individual writers, no longer living. All the monuments and shrines built by Joaquin Miller will be preserved, in the grounds and a lifesize equestrian statue, of the poet is among the memorials planned.

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