

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Joaquin Miller Home (The Abbey)

AND/OR COMMON

The Abbey

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Joaquin Miller Road and Sanborn Drive

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

California

— VICINITY OF

CODE

06

COUNTY

Alameda

CODE

001

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

DISTRICT  
 BUILDING(S)  
 STRUCTURE  
 SITE  
 OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC  
 PRIVATE  
 BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

IN PROCESS  
 BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED  
 UNOCCUPIED  
 WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED  
 YES: UNRESTRICTED  
 NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE  
 COMMERCIAL  
 EDUCATIONAL  
 ENTERTAINMENT  
 GOVERNMENT  
 INDUSTRIAL  
 MILITARY

MUSEUM  
 PARK  
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
 RELIGIOUS  
 SCIENTIFIC  
 TRANSPORTATION  
 OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Oakland, California (Parks Department)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Room 224, City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

— VICINITY OF

STATE

California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, Registry of Deeds, ETC. County Recorder's Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Room 100, 1225 Fallon Street

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Joaquin Miller House is a small three-part frame building at the foot of the steep hills East of Oakland California. Composed of three single rooms joined together, the so-called "Abbey" must be seen as the most provincial of efforts to impose gothic-revival detail upon the three rooms.

Two of the rooms, with gabled roofs, have their narrow side to the front, while the third, with broad side front has a flat roof and overhanging eaves. Attached to the flat-roofed room is a curious open lean-to, which apparently is without purpose.

The monuments to Miller's various admired men are scattered in the nearby hills. Each of them is hand-built, by Miller, of rubble, about ten feet high. A cylindrical castellated monument memorializes Robert Browning, an elongated cube with two pointed and two slit windows memorializes John C. Fremont, the California pioneer, and a pyramid is dedicated to Moses, the biblical figure. Finally, the site contains a funeral pyre built by Miller for his own cadaver, which pyre, however, was never used despite Miller's own death in 1913.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Joaquin Miller

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Joaquin Miller, the so-called "poet of the Sierras," is said to be the first major poet produced on the far-western frontier. His writings deal largely with exploits of the pioneers, outlaws, and Indians of the wild west. From 1863 to 1885, Miller travelled in England and Europe regaling the natives with adventure stories of the most imaginative sort. Franklin Walker says that just as he borrowed the name of the West's most famous bandit for his non-deplume, he borrowed the events of a dime novel for his past. Returning to California, he built his house, "The Abbey," and a series of monuments to various men Miller admired. The most famous of his numerous literary products, are Songs of the Sierras (1871), and Songs of the Sunlands (1873).

## HISTORY

Cincinnatus Heine, born near Liberty, Indiana, in 1837, was brought to a homestead in Oregon with his family in a covered wagon in 1852. He quickly took to the adventuresome atmosphere of the wild west, following a turbulent career as a miner, judge, student, teacher, an express-rider, and editor. His first book of poems, Specimens (1868), met with only limited local interest. Assuming the name of the West's most notorious outlaw, Joaquin Murietta (1832-1853), and migrating to England, he immediately grasped the potential of his natural inclination to showmanship. In England, parading about in red shirt, high boots, and a broad sombrero, Miller established himself as the center of attention in certain circles, performing such zany acts as smoking three cigars at a time, and bitin- the ankles of squealing debutantes in Mayfair drawing rooms. Miller was providing the English with just what they expected of a California frontiersman, and in 1871, when Longman's published Miller's Songs of the Sierras, he was loudly acclaimed.

After a brief visit to America which confirmed his unpopularity at home (largely because of his lack of learning and his unrealistically romantic depiction of the West), Miller decided to console himself with more foreign travel. Visiting South America, Europe, and possibly the Near East, all the while grinding out more and more of his poetry and prose, Miller returned to the U.S.A. sometime in the early '80s. He briefly tried living in New York, Boston, and Washington, but found them too crowded. In 1883, he remarried, and in 1886, settled permanently in Oakland, California, purchasing a 100 acre estate known as "The Heights."

(CONTINUED)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Pattee, Fred Lewis, A History of American Literature Since 1870 (New York, 1915).  
 Patterson, Martin S., Joaquin Miller, Literary Frontiersman (Stanford, 1937).  
 Harlan, Esther, "Joaquin Miller Home," in California Historical Landmark Series  
 (Berkeley, 1936).  
 Bates, Ernest, "Joaquin Miller" in Dictionary of American Biographies Vol. XII  
 Ed. Dumas Malone (New York, 1933).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 14

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 0	5 7 1 0 8 0	4 1 8 5 2 8 0	B	1 0	5 7 1 7 6 0	4 1 8 5 2 0 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1 0	5 7 1 7 2 0	4 1 8 4 8 2 0	D	1 0	5 7 1 0 4 0	4 1 8 4 9 0 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James Dillon, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

9/23/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/8/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

((NATIONAL HISTORIC  
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**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Planting many thousands of trees there, Miller also built a house called "The Abbey," and built stone monuments to Robert Browning, John C. Fremont, and Moses, as well as a funeral pyre for himself. All of these structures survive, but the pyre was never used.

In his last years, Miller continued to produce abundantly and seems to have enjoyed playing the curious bearded sage to the amusement of the local folks. When he wasn't writing or planting trees or building stone monuments, one might find Miller teaching someone to throw a tomahawk or entertaining club-women under a cloudless sky by performing his Indian chant rain-dance, a mixture of nonsense and profanity. To confound his audience, Miller had a sprinkler system installed on the roof of his cabin to produce the required "rain shower." Miller finally died in 1913.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

The Joaquin Miller House is located at the northwest corner of Sanborn Drive and Joaquin Miller Road, in the city of Oakland, California. It is entirely within Joaquin Miller Park, owned and operated by the city of Oakland, California.

The national historic landmark consists of the small house (known as "The Abbey"), in which Miller lived, and four stone monuments on the hills behind the house, which Miller built. The monuments are: 1) a funeral pyre for himself, which was never used, 2) a cylindrical, castellated monument to Robert Browning, 3) a cubical monument to John C. Fremont, and 4) a pyramidal monument to Moses, of biblical fame. The enclosed map of Joaquin Miller Park identifies each of these within the park. The environment, then as now, consisted of steep hills covered by scattered brush and light forest.

No other structures within the park contribute to the significance of this national historic landmark, other than the house and the four monuments built by Miller. As shown in detail on the undated map, "Joaquin Miller," by the Oakland, California, Park Department, beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of Joaquin Miller Road proceed west along the park boundary to a corner point on Joaquin Miller Road; thence north, and east, and north again along said boundary to its intersection with the Sinawik Horse Trail; thence east along the horse trail to its junction with the foot trail which parallels Sanborn Drive just south of the trail; thence east and south along this foot trail to its intersection with Sanborn Drive; thence along the road edge of Sanborn Drive a distance of about 5/16 of a mile; thence due south in a straight line to an intersection with Sanborn Drive; thence generally south along the inside edge of Sanborn Drive to the beginning.