

# CITY OF OAKLAND



ONE FRANK OGAWA PLAZA • 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

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**TO:** Matthew Webb  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

**FROM:** Jean Quan, Council Member, District 4

**DATE:** April 6, 2009

**RE:** Restoration of The Abbey and Interpretive Signage

## **SUMMARY:**

The Abbey is a non-occupied, city-owned building built in 1886 by poet Joaquin Miller. The structure was partially restored in 2005. Since then, the members of the Joaquin Miller Park Working Group, representing park users and city representatives, have wanted to fully restore the structure to the way it looked in photos of the late 1800s and to provide visitors with educational information about Joaquin Miller and the park. The Abbey is a City of Oakland Landmark and it is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The project is anticipated to cost between \$50,000 and \$76,000, all privately raised. Some of the work can be done by volunteers. Fund raising will start after the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission has reviewed the proposal

## **BACKGROUND:**

Restoration of The Abbey was identified as a priority in 2004 during two widely-attended community forums that developed a list of projects to enhance Joaquin Miller Park. Under the leadership of the Joaquin Miller Working Group, research and construction drawings were developed pro-bono by The 1870 Design Group to:

1. Restore the stair to the Abbey, the bridge and bench over dry creek and the rose arbor;
2. Paint the decorative sunburst over the entry;
3. Install new ADA compliant walkways to the Abbey from Joaquin Miller Road and from the Abbey to the trail and playground;

4. Install eight interpretive signs, (see attached drafts in Attachment B); and
5. Install low maintenance native California plantings.

The proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Alameda County Historical Society and the City of Oakland Landmark Preservation Board. The Oakland Landmark Preservation Board has asked that we return to them when the interpretive signs have been fully developed and designed.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

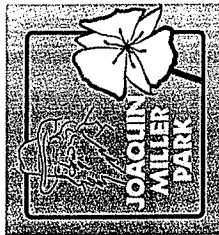
We are asking the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission to approve the restoration project.

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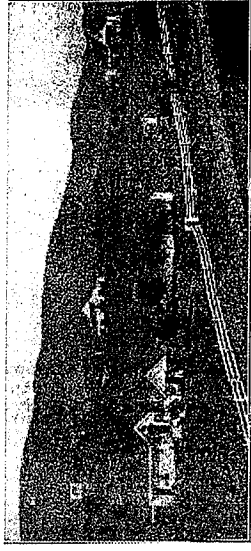
Jean Quan  
Council Member, District 4

Attachment A (PDF 1-4)  
Attachment B (PDF 5)

# Joaquin Miller's Abbey



The tiny cottage known as "The Abbey" was built by 19th Century poet and environmentalist Joaquin Miller as part of an inspirational artists' retreat. He purchased 70 grassy acres, parcel-by-parcel, in "The Heights" above the "City of the Oaks" in 1886 and erected monuments, structures for his mother and daughter, and coordinated the planting of 75,000 trees—Monterey pine, Monterey cypress, olive and eucalyptus.



"THE ABBEY" Joaquin Miller, Oakland, Cal., 1886.



Joaquin Miller, poet, environmentalist and cultural icon of the last 19th Century. 1841-1913



Joaquin Miller at the Abbey with his mother (left), daughter Juanita and grandson.




Joaquin Miller in 1875

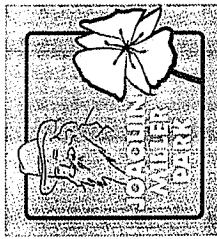


The City of Oakland purchased the Abbey and the 68 surrounding acres in 1919 to establish Joaquin Miller Park. Today the park contains more than 500 acres. Maps of the park are available at the Ranger Station.



 City of Oakland Office of Parks & Recreation

**A**

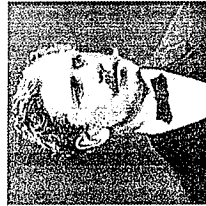


## A Haven for Artists, Poets and Performers

In the late 1800s, Joaquin Miller hosted gatherings of such notables as authors Jack London, Ambrose Bierce, Mark Twain, Bret Harte and Prentice Mulford; English humorist and playwright Tom Hood; illustrator / engraver Frank Leslie; poets Walt Whitman, Ina Coolbrith and George Sterling; English statesman and writer Lord Houghton; actress Lily Langtry.



Mark Twain  
1835-1910



Ambrose Bierce,  
1842-1914



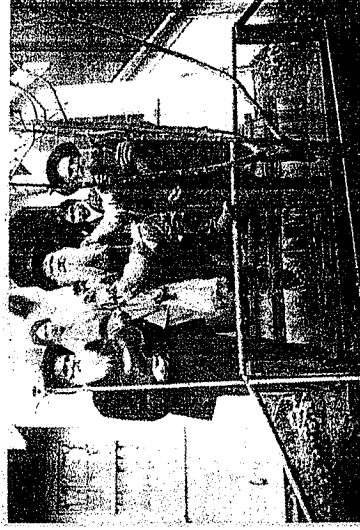
Lily Langtry  
1853-1928



Bret Harte  
1836-1902



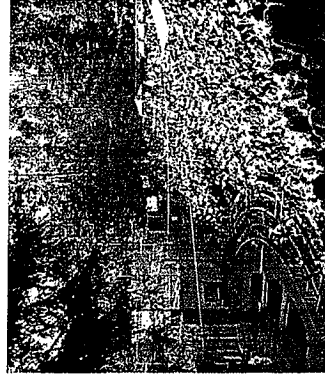
During a trip to the Bay Area in 1870, he met California's first Poet Laureate Ina Coolbrith (1841-1928), who convinced him to take the colorful pen name of "Joaquin" Miller.



Entertaining at the Abbey when?



Juanita Miller, his daughter, (center) continued the legacy, hosting musical, poetic and dramatic performances at her theatrical playhouse for local youth and families. She also produced the annual "Joaquin Miller Day" at Woodminster Amphitheater. She died in 1970.

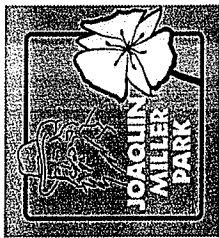


Joaquin Miller Park continues the performing arts tradition at the Woodminster Amphitheatre, built in 1935, with summer musicals offered by Producer's Associates and the City's *Sundays in the Redwoods* fall concert series.



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B



# Joaquin Miller's Legacy-- The Monument Loop

This 20-minute walk through the park features five monuments--four hand-made by Joaquin Miller between 1892 and 1913.

## 1. Statute of Joaquin Miller

The work of Kisa Beeck, the statue of Oakland's "Poet of the Sierras" was commissioned by his daughter to mark the spot where her grandmother's cottage once stood.

## 2. Funeral Pyre

Joaquin Miller erected this funeral pyre for his own cremation, but was not cremated herewas.



Map showing route of Monument Trail with



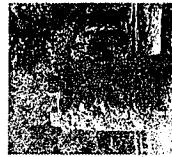
## 3. Pyramid to Moses

Built by Joaquin Miller in 1892 to symbolize his belief in the Ten Commandments.



## 4. Rook --Browning Monument

Created by Joaquin Miller to honor his fellow poets, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



## 5. Fremont Monument

Joaquin Miller dedicated this monument to John C. Fremont, the noted 19th Century surveyor. The story is that Miller fell in love with the view at this spot, where Fremont supposedly stood when he named the view "The Golden Gate".



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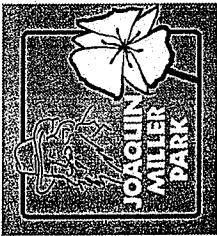
C

# The Creation of a Park

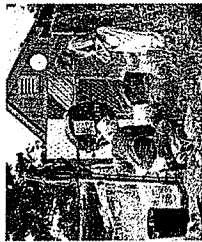
Map showing park in shades:  
 Original 68 acres  
 Redwood Groves  
 Castle Canyon

Joaquin Miller Park was formed when the City of Oakland purchased 68 acres from the estate of Joaquin Miller, the noted 19th Century "Poet of the Sierras" and environmentalist.

By 1929, when developers began building nearby, the Save the Redwoods League purchased and later (gifted to the City of Oakland) the adjacent redwood groves, known as Sequoia Park. The redwoods here and in nearby East Bay Regional Parks are considered to be the only redwood forest to flourish today in an urban setting.



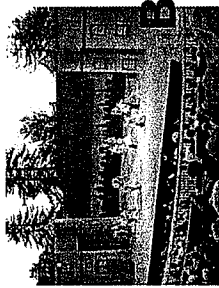
Pygmy Redwood Grove



Friends of Sausal Creek Native Plant Nursery propagate native plants for the Sausal Creek Watershed and other local creek restoration projects. ([www.sausalcreek.org](http://www.sausalcreek.org))



Chabot Space & Science Center, internationally recognized space observatory and science museum located at 10000 Skyline Blvd. It has the nation's largest telescopes, open for public viewing, free most Fridays and Saturdays, weather permitting. ([www.Chabotspapace.com](http://www.Chabotspapace.com))



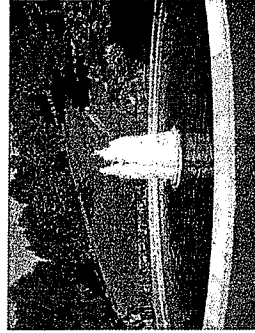
Woodminster Amphitheater, also part of the WPA work in 1935, is home to Summer Musicals, the annual Sundays in the Redwoods Concert Series in the fall, graduations and other outdoor entertainment. [www.woodminster.com/](http://www.woodminster.com/); [www.oaklandnet.com/parks/Sundays/](http://www.oaklandnet.com/parks/Sundays/)



Liberty Redwood Memorial Grove 19xx



The California Writers Club grew out of the turn of the century literary movement in the San Francisco Bay area. The Club began planting trees to honor California writers and poets in 1930. The Writers Memorial Grove is on land which originally belonged to Joaquin Miller, who dreamed of establishing a memorial for artists and writers there.

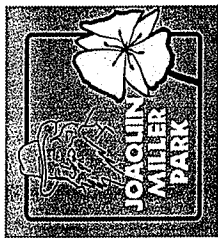


The Cascades and Fountain, built as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in 1935, moved to Oakland in 1941.



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D



# The Flora and Fauna of Joaquin Miller Park



Western Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*, family Corvidae). Found in chaparral as well as riverside thickets and suburban backyards, this bird is noticed by everyone because it is noisy, relatively bold and gregarious. It is found especially in Oaks. Omnivorous, it eats seeds, insects, carrion, lizards, small snakes and mammals.

The park is home to 200 species of native plants including the elusive Oakland Star Tulip, pallid manzanita, leatherwood, alongside nonnatives fennel, acacia and eucalyptus. California's state grass, purple needlegrass, is abundant



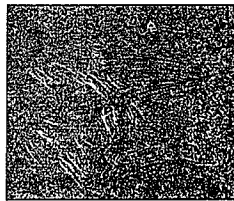
Oakland Star Tulip (*Calochortus umbellatus*) is native to dry, brushy slopes and open grassland in the Bay Area, primarily on serpentine soils. Because of its limited growth in the wild, it is on the California Native Plant Society "watch" list (Photo by Stuart McKeivy, California Native Plant Society)

- Map showing:
- hot open hillsides
  - cool redwood groves
  - oak woodlands
  - lush creeksides
  - wet meadows.

Towe.

California gray fox, *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*, is a mid-level carnivore sensitive to changes in land use intensity. The gray fox prefers woody, bushy, and rocky habitats adjacent to riparian woodlands, as is the case in Joaquin Miller Park. Gray foxes are most active from sunset to sunrise; thus they utilize darkness as a functional type of cover. They are shy and elusive and flee when threatened, often climbing trees to escape.

## B



Purple Needle Grass is historically found in grasslands, chaparral and oak woodlands from southern Baja to northern California. Originally it covered 20 million acres, it is now found on only about 100,000 acres. Purple Needle Grass grows in a variety of soil types, such as dry, clay soils and well-drained, rich soils.



Pallid manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pallida*), is an upright shrub in the heath family (*Ericaceae*). An endangered species, there are 9 known plants at Chabot Space & Science Center and another x plants in Joaquin Miller Park. Chabot has embarked on a native plant restoration project to restore Pallid Manzanitas in cooperation with Friends of Sausal Creek, East Bay Regional Park District and the City of Oakland.

Please do not remove trees, plants or animals from the park. This is a natural preserve and they are protected (OMC. )

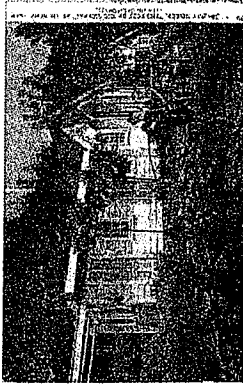
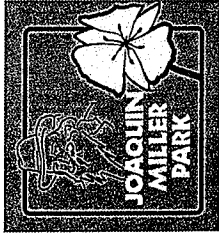
If you observe issues affecting plants or wildlife, please contact the City Naturalist at 238-3739.



City of Oakland Office of Parks & Recreation

E

# Life on the Hights--



## Juanita

by Joaquin Miller

YOU will come, my bird, Bonita?  
Come! For I by steep and stone  
Have built such nest for you, Juanita,  
As not eagle bird hath known.

Rugged! Rugged as Parnassus!  
Rude, as all roads I have trod—  
Yet are steeps and stone-strewn passes  
Smooth o'erhead, and nearest God.

Here black thunders of my cañon  
Shake its walls in Titan wars!  
Here white sea-born clouds companion  
With such peaks as know the stars!

Here madrona, manzanita—  
Here the snarling chaparral  
House and hang o'er steeps, Juanita,  
Where the gaunt wolf loved to dwell!

Dear, I took these trackless masses  
Fresh from Him who fashioned them;  
Wrought in rock, and hewed fair passes,  
Flower set, as sets a gem.

Aye, I built in woe. God willed it;  
Woe that passeth ghosts of guilt;  
Yet I built as His birds builded—  
Builded, singing as I built.

All is finished! Roads of flowers  
Wait your loyal little feet.  
All completed? Nay, the hours  
Till you come are incomplete.

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.

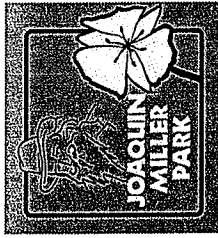
O, the sea of lights far streaming  
When the thousand flags are furled—  
When the gleaming bay lies dreaming  
As it duplicates the world!

You will come, my dearest, truest?  
Come, my sovereign queen of ten;  
My blue skies will then be bluest;  
My white rose be whitest then:  
Then the song! Ah, then the sabre  
Flashing up the walls of night!  
Hate of wrong and love of neighbor—  
Rhymes of battle for the Right!

"The Abbey was a frame building, consisting at first of a single small room with a porch. The roof was a high shingled peak, and there was no ceiling, for the rafters supporting the roof had been left bare. Visitors often said that the room looked like an unfinished museum. The walls were made of roughboards, hung with hides, bear claws, sheep horns, antlers, Mexican saddles, bows and arrows and weapons of all sorts. Wherever there was a vacant spot, Joaquin had tacked up photographs of actresses and of himself, magazine and newspaper clippings concerning himself, and some original drawings that he had done as illustrations for his poetry."

*Splended Poseur, Joaquin Miller American Poet,*  
by M.M. Marberry, 1953)





## Help Us Improve Joaquin Miller Park

Trail Maintenance  
Fund \$25 on up

The restoration to the Abbey was made possible through generous donations from the community --financial support, in-kind services and volunteer labor.

Reprinting of maps/  
brochures \$1,000

Maintaining the natural heritage of this park for future generations depends on the continued support of our community.

Install Picnic  
Tables/benches  
\$2,000

For a list of current projects , go to [www.oaklandnet.com/parks/joaquin miller](http://www.oaklandnet.com/parks/joaquin miller).

Interpretive  
Signage \$5,000

Donations are coordinated through the Friends of Oakland Parks & Recreation c/o Joaquin Miller Park Projects--[www.oaklandparks.org](http://www.oaklandparks.org) or (510) 465-1850

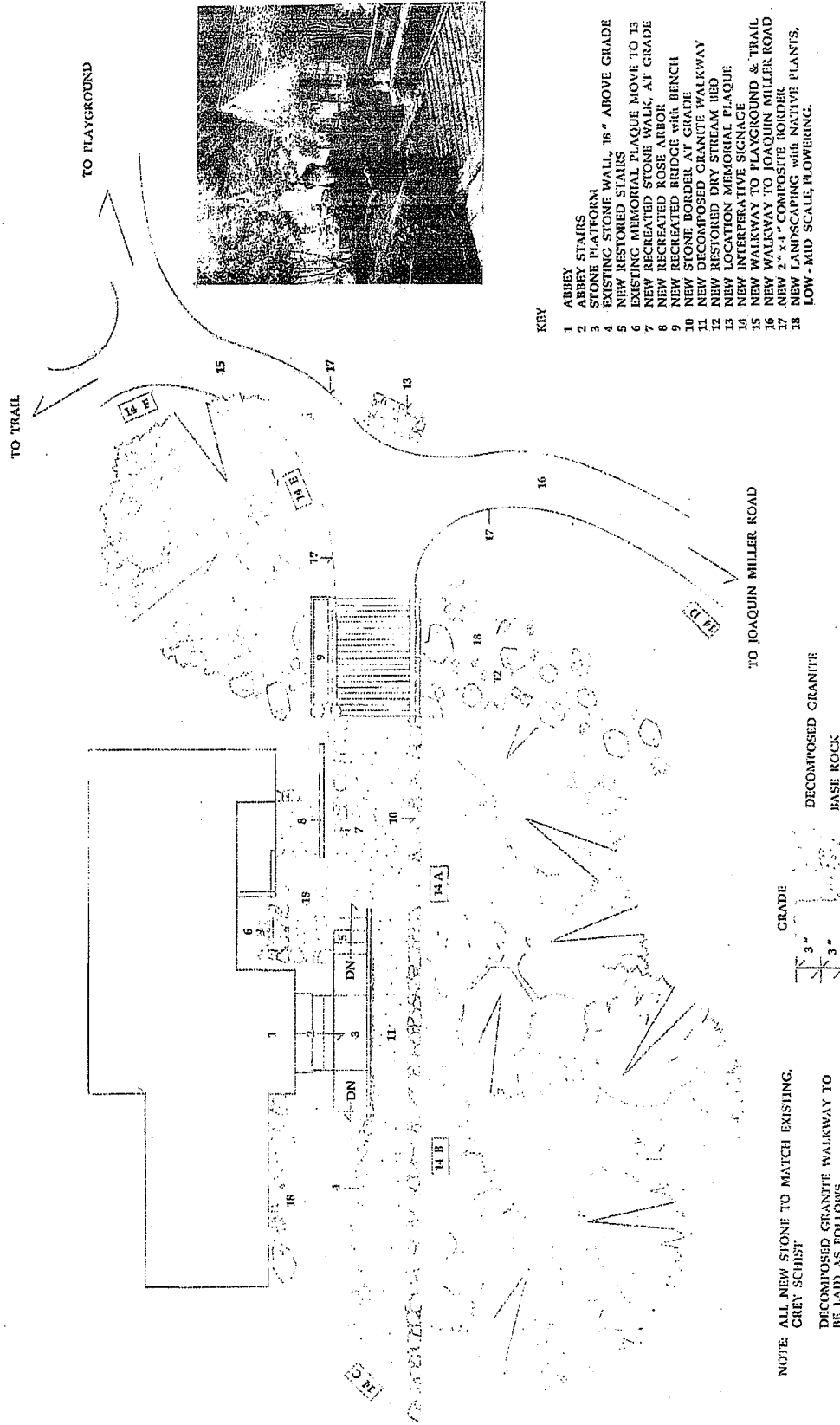
Sponsor a *Sundays*  
*in the Redwoods*  
Concert \$15,000



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**G**

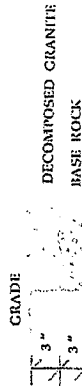
# SITE PLAN



**KEY**

- 1 ABBEY STAIRS
- 2 ABBEY PLATFORM
- 3 STONE PLATFORM
- 4 EXISTING STONE WALL, 18" ABOVE GRADE
- 5 NEW RESTORED STAIRS
- 6 EXISTING MEMORIAL PLAQUE MOVE TO 13
- 7 NEW RECREATED STONE WALK, AT GRADE
- 8 NEW RECREATED ROSE ARBOR
- 9 NEW RECREATED BRIDGE WITH BENCH
- 10 NEW STONE BORDER AT GRADE
- 11 NEW DECOMPOSED GRANITE WALKWAY
- 12 NEW RESTORED MEMORIAL PLAQUE
- 13 NEW RESTORED MEMORIAL PLAQUE
- 14 NEW INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE
- 15 NEW WALKWAY TO PLAYGROUND & TRAIL
- 16 NEW WALKWAY TO JOAQUIN MILLER ROAD
- 17 NEW 2" x 4" COMPOSITE BORDER
- 18 NEW LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS, LOW-MID SCALE, FLOWERING.

NOTE: ALL NEW STONE TO MATCH EXISTING, GREY SCHIST  
 DECOMPOSED GRANITE WALKWAY TO BE LAID AS FOLLOWS.



REVISIONS	DATE

The ABBEY  
 JOAQUIN MILLER RESIDENCE  
 JOAQUIN MILLER ROAD  
 OAKLAND

1570 DESIGN GROUP  
 4096 PIEDMONT AVENUE # 101  
 OAKLAND CA 94611-5221  
 PHONE/FAX 415/355-7570

DATE: 7/17/06	SHEET: 1
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"	OF: 4
DATE: 7/17/06	DESIGNER: CHERRY

REVISIONS	BY

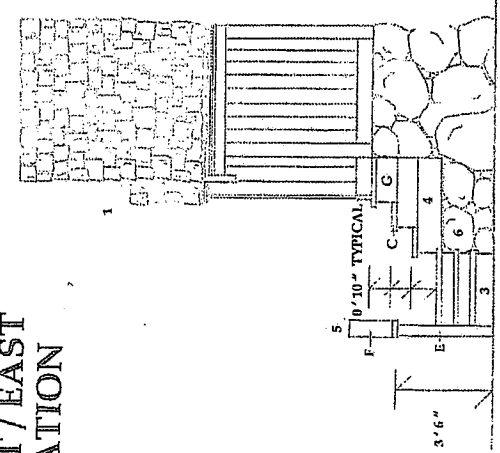
The ABBEY  
 JOAQUIN MILLER RESIDENCE  
 JOAQUIN MILLER ROAD  
 OAKLAND  
 1870 DESIGN GROUP  
 4096 RIDDMONT AVENUE # 101  
 OAKLAND CA 94611-5221  
 PHONE/FAX 415/355-1870

Date	2/16/85
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Drawn	
Check	
Sheet	3
Total	9

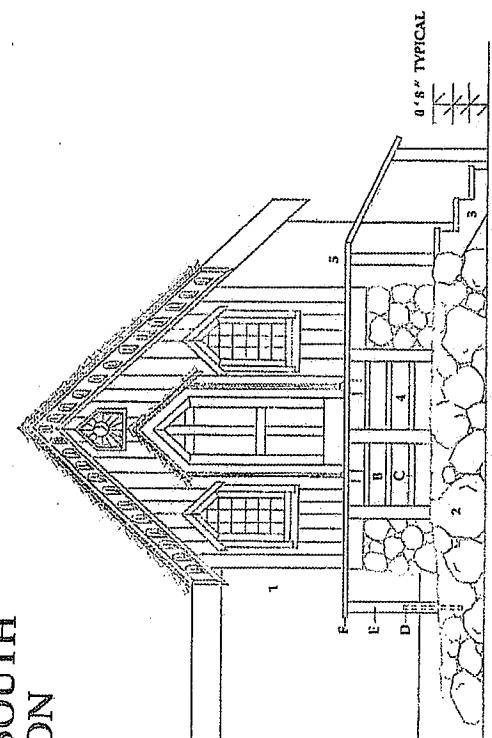
# ELEVATIONS

## RIGHT / EAST ELEVATION

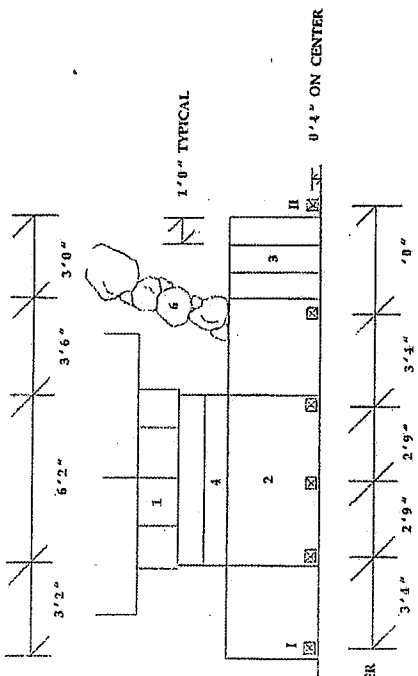
## FRONT / SOUTH ELEVATION



- KEY
  - 1 ABBEY
  - 2 STONE PLATFORM
  - 3 EXISTING STAIRS
  - 4 RECREATED STAIRS
  - 5 RECREATED RAILING
  - 6 PROPOSED RETAINING WALL
- MATERIALS
  - STAIRS
  - A STRINGER - 2 x 12 REDWOOD
  - B RISER - 1 x 9 REDWOOD
  - C TREAD - 2 x 12 REDWOOD
  - RAILING
  - D STEEL ROD - 1 1/2" Diameter / To Be Confirmed.
  - E POST - 4 x 4 REDWOOD
  - F TOP CAP - 2 x 6 REDWOOD
  - SIDING
  - G BOARD - 1 x 12 REDWOOD



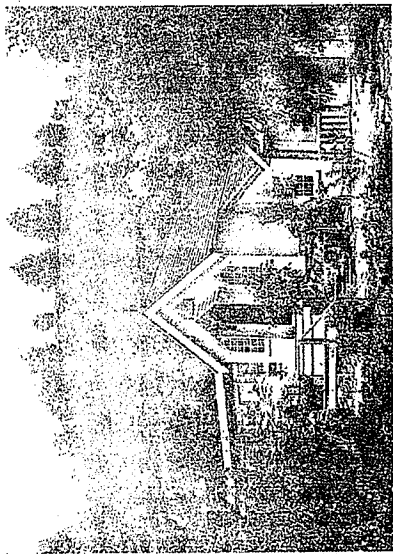
## SITE PLAN



- NOTES
- I Five RAILING POSTS will be core drilled to allow mounting on STEEL RODS which will be inserted in a Collar and Mortared into place in the Existing STONE PLATFORM.
- II One RAILING POST will be installed at Grade and positioned next to the EXISTING STAIRS.

CONTRACTOR: AND HENCKS, INC.

# ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTATION



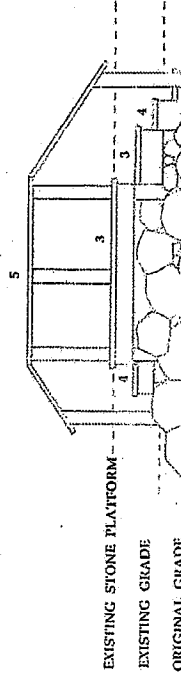
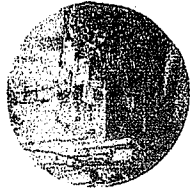
JOAQUIN MILLER'S HOME, Six Years After Buying a Bear's Hill



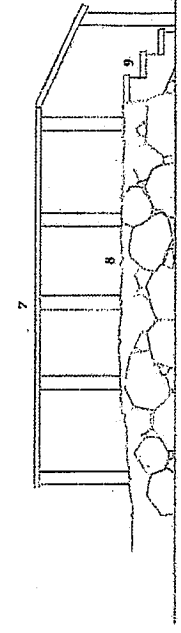
"The Abbey" from a view down "The Falls" -  
Crescent, Cross and eye of the Sun.  
All symbols of the Great One.

- KEY**
- 1 ABBEY
  - 2 ORIGINAL STAIRS to ABBEY
  - 3 LANDING
  - 4 ORIGINAL STAIRS to GRADE
  - 5 ORIGINAL RAILING to ABBEY
  - 6 PROPOSED STAIRS to ABBEY
  - 7 PROPOSED RAILING
  - 8 EXISTING STONE PLATFORM
  - 9 EXISTING STAIRS to GRADE

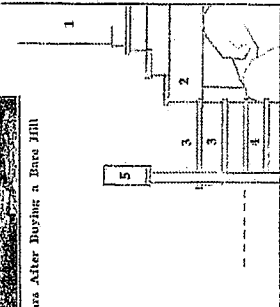
STAIR DETAIL



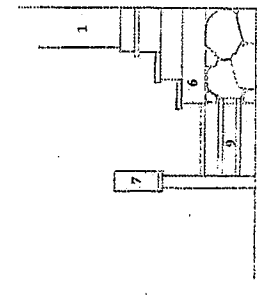
RAILING: AS BUILT



RECONSTRUCTION



STAIRS: AS BUILT

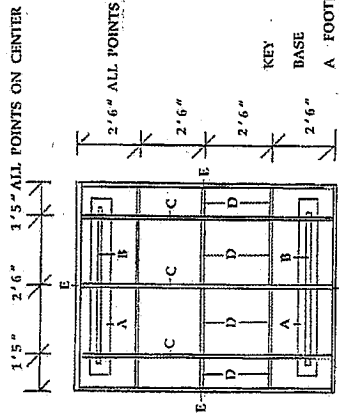


RECONSTRUCTION

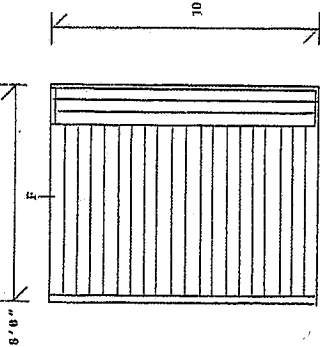
NOTE: Height of 1st RISER from LANDING.  
The Photographic record indicates that this RISER was set Taller than the others and the TREAD was used as a place to sit.

# CARPENTRY PLAN

## BRIDGE: STRUCTURAL PLAN



## BRIDGE: DECKING PLAN



**KEY**

**BASE**

A. FOOTING - CONCRETE

B. NAILING BLOCK - 2x9 PRESSURE TREATED STRUCTURE

**RAILING**

C. JOIST - 2x9 PRESSURE TREATED

D. BLOCKING - 2x9 PRESSURE TREATED

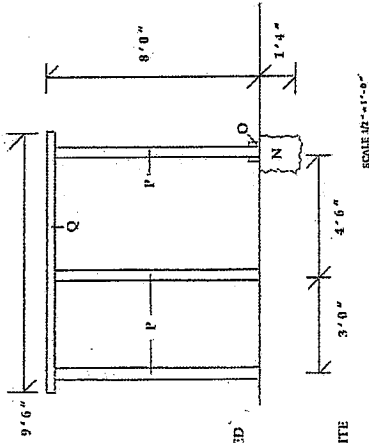
E. RIM JOIST - 2x9 REDWOOD

F. DECKING - 2x6 EVERGRAIN / COMPOSITE

G. POST - 4x4 REDWOOD

H. TOP CAP - 2x6 REDWOOD

## ROSE ARBOR: ELEVATION



- NOTES**
- I All Wood to be Screwed.
  - II BRIDGE DECKING to be installed with CLIPS and Attached from Beneath.
  - III All RAILING POSTS and BENCH LEGS to be Screwed to JOISTS and BLOCKING.
  - IV The BENCH BACK to be Notched into Back BENCH LEGS.

**KEY**

**BENCH**

F. BENCH LEG - 2x4 REDWOOD

I. STRUCTURE - 2x4 REDWOOD

K. SURFACE - 2x6 REDWOOD

L. BENCH BACK - 2x4 REDWOOD

M. BENCH NECK - 2x2 REDWOOD

**ROSE ARBOR**

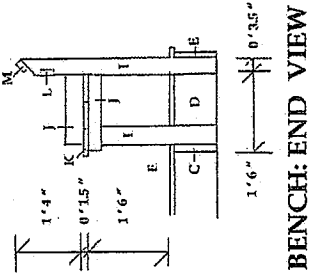
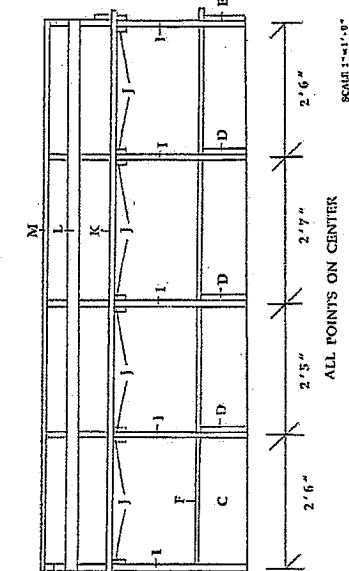
N. FOOTING - CONCRETE

O. BRACKET - SIMPSON LCH 44

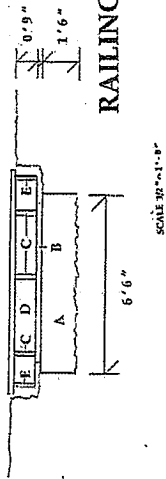
P. POST - 4x4 REDWOOD

Q. TOP - 2x4 REDWOOD

## BENCH: ELEVATION



## RAILING: END VIEW



DATE	BY

1870 DESIGN GROUP  
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JOAQUIN MILLER RESIDENCE  
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