

News from the Inn-Spector



The Miller Acquisition of the Mission Inn Lot

We've heard and told the story for years - Christopher Miller received the lot upon which the Glenwood Hotel and later the Mission Inn was built in lieu of back wages owed to him by the Riverside Land and Irrigating Company. Research has shown, though, that that is not true. The chain of title for Block 6, Range 6 of the Town of Riverside (i.e. the parcel upon which the Mission Inn lies) goes as follows:

1. On January 23, 1877, the Southern California Colony Association under S. C. Evans sold to both C. C. Miller and G. O. Newman "Block 6, Range 6, of the Town of Riverside" the fair market price for entire blocks in downtown Riverside at that time (San Bernardino Deed Book R, p. 485). While other lots were being sold, a few other entire blocks were also sold, and they all sold for \$250.
2. On August 29, 1879, C. C. Miller bought from G. O. Newman and Mary Emma Newman "Block 6, Range 6, of the Town of Riverside." Miller paid his daughter and son-in-law \$3280 for it (San Bernardino Deed Book 21, p. 79).
3. On February 4, 1880, C. C. and Mary Miller transferred to Frank Miller the same property for \$5,000 (San Bernardino Deed Book 21, p. 416).

Somewhere down along the line, the story was told that C. C. Miller received the lot in lieu of back wages. This thought was "set in stone" in 1938 when Zona Gale wrote: "From the first recorded deed showing the transfer of the block on which the Mission Inn stands, from the Southern California Colony Association, for \$250.00, there is a later deed to Mr. C. C. Miller for the same property for \$328.00 - which was in lieu of salary owed him by the Association; then to Frank A. Miller for \$5,000 in 1880" (Gale, 1938, p. 38). The first deed she talks about is one from January 23, 1877. The last one is the one to Frank Miller dated February 4, 1880. The "later deed" story as written by Gale is what I believe set in motion the account we've told for years. However, there are three very strong points which at least in my mind condemn her story:

1. First of all, the story does not logically work. Why would the Association transfer title to C. C. Miller (who, according to the deed, paid them), then turn around and record another deed to him in lieu of back wages? If they wanted or needed to give him money, they could have simply done that without recording a deed. In other words, if C. C. Miller owned the property, the Association could not have given it to him later as payment of back wages.

2. The second point is more damning - namely, that in all of my research through the San Bernardino County deed books of the time, there is no deed as described by Zona Gale. Although C. C. Miller did dabble in real estate, no more deeds are recorded for the Mission Inn block besides those mentioned above.
3. Curiously, the \$328 figure is exactly 1/10th the amount that the elder Miller paid Gus and Emma Newman in 1879. Zona Gale (or someone else) has apparently misinterpreted the deed.

On a sidenote, there is confusion as to why and when C. C. Miller sold the lot to Frank Miller and moved to Blythe. The two events happened within only a few months of each other, which has caused confusion. However, they had nothing to do with each other.

C. C. Miller and Mary Miller sold the lot to Frank under deed dated February 4, 1880. Frank did pay \$5,000 for the property. The original engineer working on the Blythe project was Oliver Calloway, who was killed on March 28, 1880 (*Arizona Sentinel*, April 3, 1880). It was Calloway's death that prompted George Irish, the business manager in Blythe, to hire C. C. Miller. This, of course, could not have happened before February 4. Because of the turmoil in the Blythe area after Calloway's killing, C. C. Miller probably was not approached by Irish until at least mid-April, 1880, and would not have gone to Blythe until the late spring of 1880. In Irish's recollections, reprinted in Brown and Boyd's *History of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties* (p. 591), he indicates that Miller started only after the turmoil had subsided following Calloway's death.

Klotz's answer to why C. C. Miller sold the Hotel to Frank was that the elder Miller was simply becoming tired of running a hotel, and that probably did have something to do with it. However, I found what is perhaps another reason. On April 24, 1880, the *Riverside Press & Horticulturalist* mentions that G. O. Newman, Miller's son-in-law and business partner, had received the appointment of Deputy United States Surveyor in connection with the Geological Survey of the States of Nevada and California (which was quite an honor). C. C. Miller must have known about Newman applying for the job some time back, which also may have been the impetus for Newman selling his portion of the Glenwood block to his father-in-law. C. C. Miller may then have sold the hotel to Frank so he could spend more time being the "sole" partner of the Miller and Newman firm. My own speculation is that the Blythe project simply fell into the lap of C. C. Miller at a very opportune time and had nothing to do with the selling of the hotel or Newman's appointment. Nevertheless, C. C. Miller jumped at the chance to work on the Blythe project.

As an aside, it is the appointment of G. O. Newman, and his moving to Nevada, that took Emma, his wife and Frank's sister, out of the picture so far as the Glenwood Hotel was concerned.

How should we change our story? It may be best to simply say that C. C. Miller purchased the land upon which the hotel sits, and then sold the hotel to Frank either for business reasons or to simply get out of the hotel business.