

MILLER CANYON

The Miller Canyon Trail (Trail # 106) in the Huachuca Mountains passes by several historic sites as it winds its way up to the Crest.

Beatty's Guest Ranch & Orchard: The Guest Ranch is located at the end of the Miller Canyon Road just beyond the trailhead for the Miller Canyon Trail. Although the property has been operating as a guest ranch only since May of 1997, Tom & Edith Beatty have lived on the property since March of 1967 when they bought the first of three parcels that comprise the ranch. One of the guest cabins was originally a miner's cabin that was listed on the tax rolls in 1911. The ranch is completely surrounded by Coronado National Forest land. The forestland to the west of the ranch was incorporated into the Miller Wilderness Area in 1984. The Monument Fire of June 2011 bypassed the structures of the guest ranch but completely destroyed the apple orchard for which the guest ranch was famous.



Beatty Ranch House



Miner's Cabin dating from the original town of Palmerlee

The Town of Palmerlee: The town was named for its founder, Joseph S. Palmerlee who had moved to Miller Canyon from Bisbee around the turn of the 20th Century. Palmerlee had been an electrician at the Copper Queen Mine in Bisbee and by the time of the US Census (June 1900) was living in Miller Canyon and still listed his occupation as Electrician. By 1904, however, he was the General Manager of the Huachuca Consolidated Mining Company and was doing preliminary work on claims farther up in Miller Canyon. The town of Palmerlee was evidently well enough established that by the summer of 1904, it was recognized in an article in the Arizona Daily Star. Also, in December 1904, the post office at Reef in Carr Canyon was officially relocated to Palmerlee and Joseph Palmerlee became Postmaster. Just how large the Town of Palmerlee was is not very clear. A 1969 book on the "Ghost Towns of Arizona" by the Shermans stated that Palmerlee had a hundred inhabitants, a florist, meat market, second hand merchandise shop, boarding house, school and other concerns. It is thought, though, that not all of these activities were in Palmerlee but may have been spread out over the area served by the Palmerlee Post Office. Remnants of the town may be found in scattered locations in the canyon. The best-preserved ruin is the foundation of the

Sawmill that is located about a quarter mile up the canyon from the Beatty Guest Ranch. This location also has several terraced areas that were probably cabin sites. The only building remaining from the Palmerlee era is the miner's cabin referenced in the Beatty Guest Ranch paragraph. Some foundation remnants are also located down canyon from the Guest Ranch. A 1906 General Land Office township map and survey notes indicate only a few houses and stables at Palmerlee. On April 11 1911, the Palmerlee Post Office was moved to the town of Garces, which was just a little over a mile east of Palmerlee (just east of the present Highway 92). Joseph Palmerlee was still living in Palmerlee in 1919 but his land holdings were eventually sold to Nick Gregovich for whom the present community of Nicksville is named. In 1974, the area became part of the Colorado National Forest through a land exchange.



Sawmill Ruins

Huachuca Water Company: A reservoir and pipeline were constructed in 1882 to deliver water from a number of springs in the Miller and Carr Canyon areas to the City of Tombstone. One of the more accessible springs in Miller Canyon is located a short distance above the site of the Palmerlee Saw Mill and is depicted in the accompanying photograph as it appeared prior to the Monument Fire. This spring was severely damaged during the flooding following the Monument Fire and required a major effort to restore it. The reconstituted spring is covered with steel and dirt to protect it. It also serves as a collector for water from Gardner Spring (located farther up the canyon) that is delivered to the collector pool by a new plastic pipe installed since the Monument Fire. The original pipeline consisted of twenty miles of wrought iron piping and was a major factor in the growth of Tombstone which had been hampered by a lack of water. An interesting sidelight to the construction of the pipeline can be found in Tombstone's Boothill Cemetery. A grave marker in the third row of the cemetery indicates that a John Martin from England was killed in 1882 during an accident on the Huachuca Water Line. The pipeline has been severely damaged by natural events three times in the past (The earthquake of 1887, the floods following the fire of 1977 and the flooding following the Monument Fire of 2011). Of the three events, it is considered that the damage to the water system infrastructure that occurred after the Monument Fire was the most severe. Several of the springs were obliterated and



Huachuca Water Company Spring
Prior to Monument Fire of 2011

much of the pipeline in the canyon was destroyed. Repair of the water system has been complicated since most of the damage occurred in the wilderness area and the use of mechanized equipment was prohibited. However, major sections of the water pipe have been replaced and are clearly evident as you hike Forest Trail #106 above the sawmill site. The Huachuca Water Company still delivers water to Tombstone through this pipeline.

Mining Remnants: The Miller Canyon Trail follows an old mining road that led to several mining claims in the upper portions of Miller Canyon. One of the locations was the site of an ore processing facility. A large number of pieces of old mining equipment are still scattered about the area. However, the floods following the Monument Fire significantly increased the scattering of this equipment. Before and after photos of some of the equipment are shown below. One of the most unusual items of equipment is the remains of a metal arrastra (Slow Speed Roller Mill) that was used to crush the ore. Stone arrastras are fairly common throughout old mining sites but this is the first metal one that this hiker has seen. Additional information on the mill site can be found at the following web site: <http://www.azbackcountryadventures.com/miller.htm>

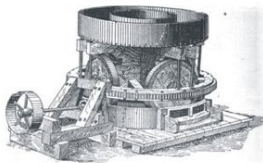


Remains of the Roller Mill before the Monument Fire



Remains of the Roller Mill after the Monument Fire

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This commercial advertisement of the Slow Speed Roller Mill is provided to give the reader an idea of what the original configuration of the roller mill was.

Summary prepared by T Johnson – July 2007. Revised by T. Johnson in March 2014. Photographs by T. Johnson. The commercial advertisement of the Slow Speed Roller Mill was provided through the courtesy of Leonard Taylor

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