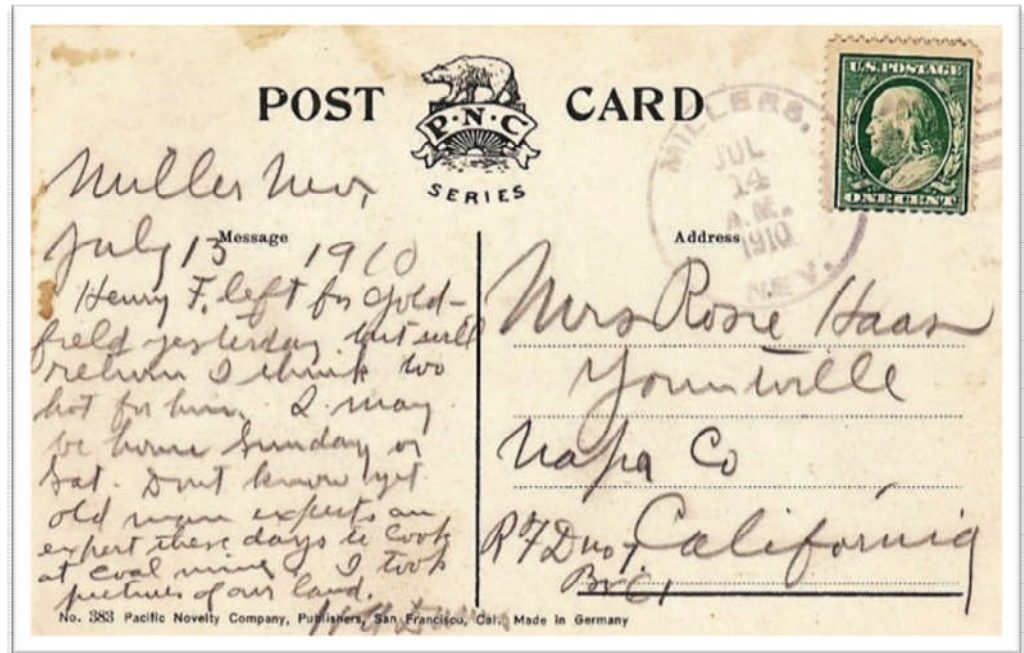


## Millers Nevada – Postal History and Travel Guide by Patrick Crosby

I spotted a picture postcard (on the right) at an online store canceled in 1910 at Millers, Nevada. Realizing that Millers was not a currently operating post office, I quickly bought the recently offered card for \$2.70, figuring I'd find out more about it later – and I did! In fact, within a week of receiving the card I found myself in Tonopah and Goldfield, the nearest living towns to Millers and whose mining operations were the reasons for Millers' existence.



Tonopah, the county seat of Nye County, NV, came to be when, after 30 years of mining, Jim Butler supposedly with the aid of his errant mules, finally hit it big by finding silver ore in 1900. In 1902 gold-bearing quartz was discovered 26 miles south and the boomtown of Goldfield came to be, now the county seat of Esmeralda County, NV. By 1903 there was a lot of unrest in these towns dealing with unions (mining companies vs. unions and unions vs. unions) and, also a Tonopah miners' riot against Chinese laborers. Because of this riot China actually boycotted U.S. imported goods.

Both of these towns were in need of a railroad for efficient transportation of ore to mills. The Tonopah Railroad was built in 1903 and a location out of the hills and with available water was chosen for a station and watering stop 13 miles to the west of Tonopah. This flat desert spot was named Millers (once in a while spelled Miller's) after Charles R. Miller who was a director of the railway, a vice-president of the Tonopah Mining Co., and later became a Delaware state senator, then its governor. The Tonopah Railroad was merged with the Goldfield Railroad in 1905 and the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad transported ore and passengers until 1947.

In late 1905 a large power plant was completed in Millers allowing a sampling plant to open, and the town had 2 boarding houses and 2 saloons. With the continued support of Charles Miller, in 1906 Millers was selected as the site for a 100-stamp cyanide mill. By 1907 the T & G Railroad built repair shops, and another large mill was constructed.

Postmarks from Millers can be expected to be found from 1906 to 1931, perhaps with a lapse around 1920. The post office was established in early 1906 (*USPOD Daily Bulletin* #7946, 3/26/1906). The USPOD stopped issuing Doane-style post-marks in the fall of 1906, so Millers must have received their Type 3 Doane canceling handstamp in 1906, which is shown on my card from 1910. The post office was discontinued 9/12/1919 (*USPOD Postal Bulletin* #12055, 3/12/1919) with mail, stamps, stamped paper, and postal account book going to Tonopah, and other supplies and records going to Sacramento, CA. Millers' 500 ton mill had been closed for a year but the *Tonopah Daily Bulletin* reported it was to reopen in early 1920.

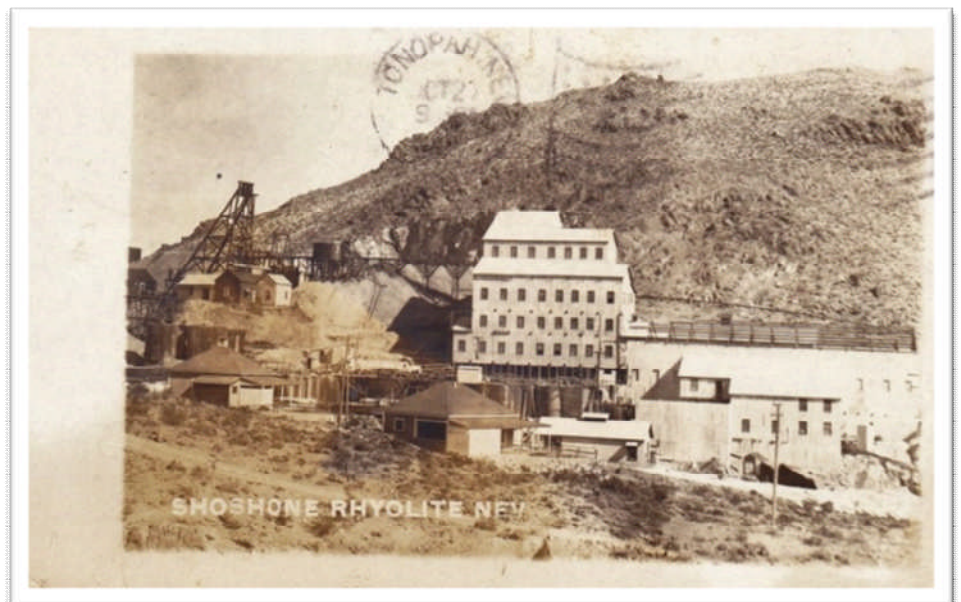
The post office may also have been closed for a while then reopened because a *Postal Bulletin* (#15779 p.3, 12/12/1931) shows the Millers post office was to be discontinued 12/31/1931 with mail to go to Tonopah. At this time and probably previously, Millers was a fourth-class post office, the lowest tier of post office. These were allowed to operate inside non-drinking establishments. The postmaster received no salary but instead received a commission on canceled stamps and P.O. box rentals plus what the postmaster could earn from sold stamps, waste paper, old newspapers, unclaimed printed matter, and waste twine. Special delivery and money orders were probably available. Additional benefits included the prestige a postmaster was accorded at the time and that the post office was likely inside his general merchandise store with postal customers stopping by regularly.

Millers grew to its largest population of 274 in 1910 and was a noisy place while the mills were in operation, probably 24 hours a day. Baseball was big with league competition from other mining towns, and Millers fielding a quality team. In 1908 the Millers ballfield had bleachers seating 300 and wire netting installed for fan protection. The visiting team and its fans often arrived and returned home on a special train. On a Sunday in May 1909 there was a non-league game pitting the Millers' married men against the unmarried men. The stakes were no dinner that night for the losers. The married men lost 16 to 5, but rumors were that they were eating anyway (*Tonopah Bonanza*, 6/1/1909).

Millers' mills and railroad shops closed because of a mining slowdown in 1911, but other activities continued. In 1941 there were 28 souls in town and with the demise of the T & G Railroad in 1947 Millers quickly became a ghost town. Now there are no signs there was ever a railroad or a town. What is there is Miller's Rest Area with restrooms and an area for free overnight camping. RV's are welcome (no clean-out available) but no trucks are allowed in the rest area. On a moonless night the star gazing is magnificent. What catches the eye during the day is a brightly shining "beacon" just to the north. This marks the innovative Crescent Dunes Solar Electricity project with its multitude of heliostats, which are computer controlled moving mirrors being optimally focused on the top of a 640' tower. They provide rays for molten salt which stores concentrated electricity later used to produce steam and generate electricity.

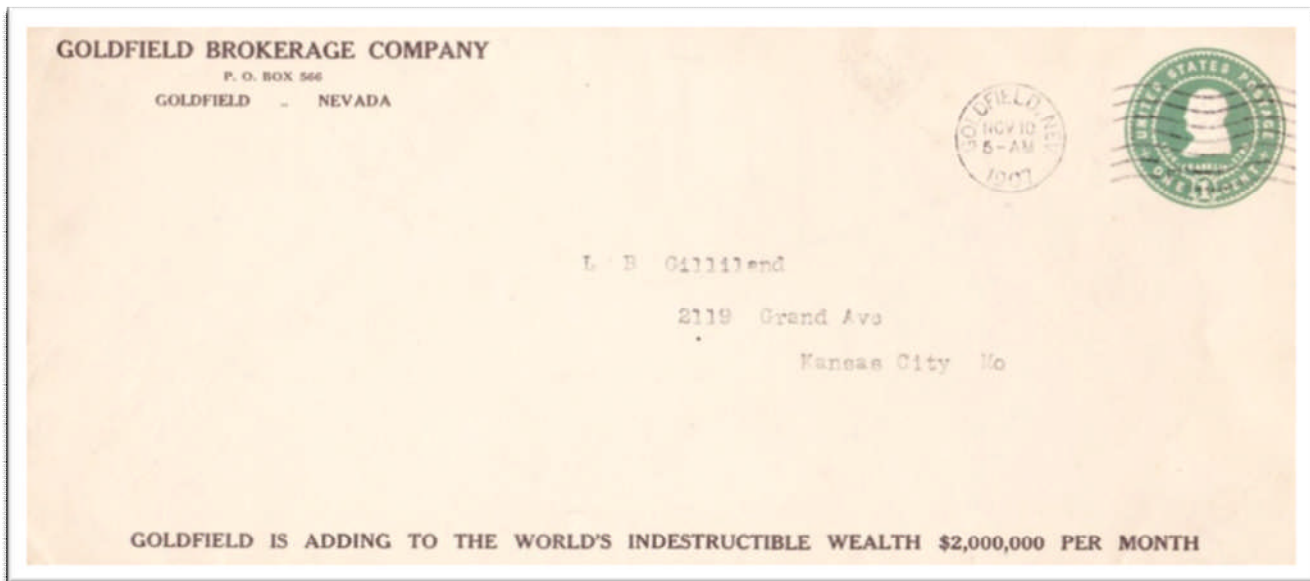
The gradual decline of Tonopah's mining operations began when the April 1906 San Francisco earthquake (est. 7.9 magnitude) and resulting fires destroyed 80% of the city and investment capital from that city dried up. Then the financial Panic of 1907 spread across the United States and Tonopah

lost two of its three banks. A 1906 population of 10,000 declined to 3,900 by 1910. In 2010 there were 2,478 residents. *Webster's Geographical Dictionary* (1964) notes Tonopah as a "distributing center for gasoline, machinery, blasting powder, whiskey, and foodstuffs". The card shown on the right of the Montgomery Shoshone mining operations near the now ghost town of Rhyolite, NV has a Tonopah American machine flag cancel used as a receiving cancel the day after it was mailed from Rhyolite on Oct. 26, 1910.



Today Tonopah is an attractive town set in the hills amid mining operations with hotels, restaurants, and many historic structures. It's about the midway point between Las Vegas and Reno (448 miles apart) and accommodates many overnights. The Central Nevada Museum is a joy with indoor and outdoor displays of the diverse history of the area – fossils, minerals, Native Americans, pioneer life, mining, and military (a test area to the southwest conducted over 1,000 above and below-ground nuclear bomb tests since 1951). If you enjoy walking, an absolute must see is the Tonopah Historic Mining Park which overlooks the town. Many separate defunct mining operations are in the park and you can walk into the old mining hoist houses with their massive machinery. Stand on top of grates installed over the Mizpah Mine's 600' deep shaft and look straight down – whoa! The Mizpah was by far the biggest producer in Tonopah and was owned and adeptly managed by Belle Butler, Jim's wife and an honored woman of Nevada's history. Expect stiff winds in both Tonopah and Goldfield, making cold days even colder, but probably welcome in the summer. The east-blowing winds saved the towns from much of the nearby nuclear bomb testing fallout, but southern Utah didn't fare as well.

If it was made of metal after 1900 you can probably find it slowly rusting somewhere in Goldfield. With the boom years ending by 1920 and the long-lasting effects of two devastating fires in 1923 and 1924 the town today "is but a whisper of its former self." It was Nevada's largest town with a reported population of around 25,000 in 1908 which dwindled to 268 in 2010. Enjoy the many miners' cabins, some still occupied as there is still gold mining. A few varied shops with pleasant owners are scattered and the Esmeralda County courthouse is a welcoming place to get out of the wind and enjoy the architecture and woodwork. Amazing to me are the multitude of travel trailers and camper shells left over the years to the elements. I think some are used as windbreaks for residences. If you are a connoisseur of French fries like I am, The Dinky Diner is for you. It is the only eating establishment in Goldfield, while back in 1907 there were 27 restaurants.



The bragging at the bottom of the Scott U379 envelope (above) postmarked in Goldfield in 1907 was no idle boast.

The glory days of Millers, Tonopah and Goldfield are over, but postal history helps to preserve their memories.

**Patrick Crosby** is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.