

WHO WAS THE “REAL” SAM MILLER OF ATLANTIC CITY? ~ Prof. Mark Sommer

WHO WAS THE “REAL” SAMUEL MILLER OF ATLANTIC CITY, NJ AND WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

By Professor Mark Sommer, Teaneck, New Jersey

This pre-printed “Missing Person” postcard reports a Samuel Miller of Atlantic City, NJ – gone missing as of August 1, 1914.



It lists known details such as:

Name: *Samuel Miller*
Color: *White*
Occupation: *Butcher, Bartender*
Age: *43 years*
Height: *About 5 feet 8 inches*
Weight: *About 190 pounds*
Build: *Stoutly built*
Color of Hair: *Black, bald in front*
Eyes: *Brown*
Beard: *Smooth face when last seen*
Nationality: Hebrew (Obviously today the proper designation would be listed as Jewish)

Fig. 1a & b: Front and back of Missing Person card, sent in 1917 from Atlantic City to San Francisco.

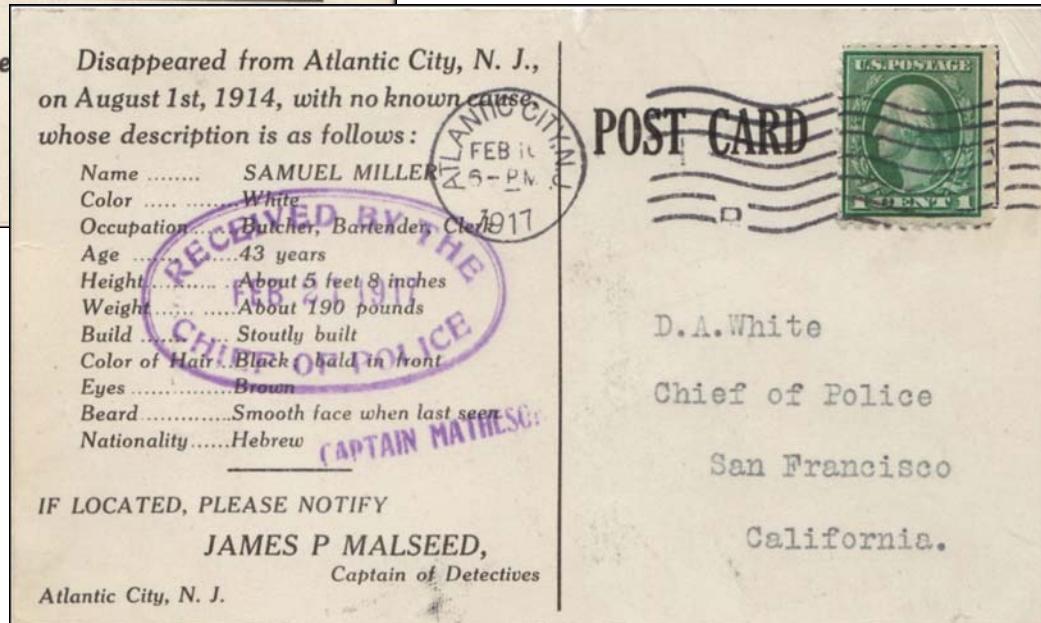
See Other

Disappeared from Atlantic City, N. J., on August 1st, 1914, with no known cause, whose description is as follows:

Name SAMUEL MILLER
Color White
Occupation Butcher, Bartender, Clerk
Age 43 years
Height About 5 feet 8 inches
Weight About 190 pounds
Build Stoutly built
Color of Hair Black, bald in front
Eyes Brown
Beard Smooth face when last seen
Nationality Hebrew

IF LOCATED, PLEASE NOTIFY

JAMES P MALSEED,
Captain of Detectives
Atlantic City, N. J.



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While these “Missing Person” postcards were relatively common a hundred years ago, what is striking is the purple oval “RECEIVED BY THE CHIEF OF POLICE - FEB. 21, 1917” (presumably in San Francisco, as that is where it is addressed). (OK, the postcard was mailed on February 16, 1917 – two and a half years after he disappeared. Were the police still diligently looking for him, just trying to close out the case, or just now getting around to it?)

This card piqued my curiosity. Many mail pieces are clues to the past – was there a story here? A search on [Ancestry.com](#) (an excellent source when researching someone) yielded this information:

The 1910 US census shows a Samuel Miller as a butcher in Atlantic City (age 35), with wife Ray (Rachael Goldstein, called Ray), and four children, Max (14), George (13), Annie (11), and Julius (7). Sam is listed as born in Austria in 1875, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1876. Ray is listed as a clerk, and since both worked in a market, it seems likely that she clerked in the butcher shop.

A note attached to a Samuel Miller family tree on Ancestry.com drew my attention:

Samuel Miller, the creep, was my grandfather, who deserted his wife Ray (Rachael Goldstein) and their four children in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Sam owned a meat market on Virginia Avenue. Two [months] later, Ray died, and my dad Julius [also known as Jules], (age 7 at the time of her death), his sister Annie (Hannah as we knew her), and brothers George and Max were all sent to Portland OR, where my dad [Jules] was raised by Ray’s sister and her husband, Bessie and Jack (Jacob) Lehrer. Samuel died in Illinois in 1962. Born in 1875 in Germany-Austria. Anyone with further knowledge, please contact:¹

The 1920 census shows a Samuel Miller (age 39) in Chicago, with wife Ray (age 36), daughter Anna (age 14 – these ages make it a questionable match), Sarah (9), Albert (4), and Irving (2). But then Samuel Miller is not an uncommon name. I think we have still not found just where “our” Sam Miller went after leaving Atlantic City.

The 1910 information seems credible. The 1920 may very well be another person, as other information beyond ages, like naturalization dates, does not match.

Direct contact with the granddaughter who wrote that note was enlightening, and it appears that (if this is the same Sam Miller) Samuel may have been born in 1870 (not 1875 as the 1910 census would imply), and that his wife Rachael died on Sept 22, 1914 – that would be approximately two months after the disappearance date on missing persons card. The children went to live with relatives in Portland, Oregon. Another family tree indicates that both Max and George eventually died in Oregon (no dates given) and that Samuel (from the questionable 1920 census) died in Illinois in 1962. Other corrections and additions from the granddaughter indicate that Max was born on April 15, 1895, George in 1897, Annie (Hannah) – in 1899, and Jules (her father) was born not in 1903 but in 1905. In 1914, when his father disappeared and his mother died, Julius (Jules) would have been approximately 9 years old.

But now we do have a story – just by scratching the surface. Questions remain, and maybe other readers can help. Who were Sam’s parents? Are there other clues to be found in Atlantic City? Or elsewhere? The burial card below (see *Figure 2*) shows a 1914 residence at 131 North Virginia Avenue – that may help – and the family has information that from 1906 – 1908, their grocery store was at 202 No. South Carolina Ave., Atlantic City, and between 1909 and 1912 it was located at the

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131 North Virginia Ave. address. In 1913, directories no longer list a grocery store, but do list Miller’s Hotel at that address. Was Sam already gone, and did Ray take in boarders at that time? What did become of Samuel Miller after 1914? After Sam’s disappearance to points unknown and Ray’s (Rachael’s) death, the family was soon dispersed. The police may have ended their search but members of his family are still searching – can anyone help?

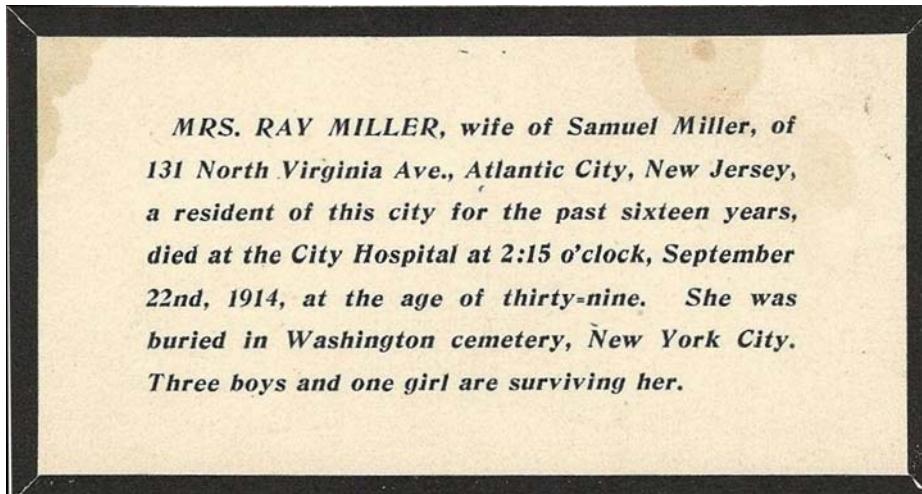


Fig. 2: Burial announcement of Ray Miller, wife of Samuel Miller and mother of 4 children. Ray (née Goldstein) died September 22, 1914, almost two months after Sam disappeared. The three boys (Max, George & Jules) and girl (Annie) went to live with an aunt and uncle in Portland, Oregon, explaining perhaps why the Atlantic City police were not actively pursuing Sam Miller.

The back of the burial announcement card in Figure 2 notes siblings of Rachael (Ray) Goldstein Miller: a sister Esther who died Mar 6 1916, in New York; a brother, Louis, who died February 25, 1920, in New York, and a brother, Herman who died September 30, 1926, in Portland, Ore., as well as Rose (no relationship given) who died Aug. 19th, 1934 in New York City.

Fig. 3 Jules, probably around age 4, as a Gold Medal Flour contest winner



Fig. 4: Atlantic City photo with Ray and Sam (at right) and all four children. Standing - Jules at left, Max and George at right & Annie (Hannah) sitting in front of them, on the left - the dark-haired girl. (Two persons unknown.)



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Did Sam Miller have a second family in Illinois? Could there have been two Sam Millers with wives named Ray? Maybe the 1920 Illinois Sam Miller is not the “real” Samuel ---and he went somewhere altogether different... The Social Security Death index and two other sources list a Sam Miller, born in 1870 and died in 1962 in Illinois.



Fig. 5: Family portrait in Atlantic City in front of the Virginia Avenue Meat Market: George Miller – in suit, standing in carriage (middle brother), next ?? maybe an employee), Samuel Miller- father/husband!!), Max Miller (eldest brother); Rachael (Ray) Miller – wife; sitting on curb Annie (Hannah) and Julius (Jules).

Any there any **NJPH** detectives or genealogy sleuths out there who can assist in completing this story? We have lots of answers, except a definitive one to the original question – where did Samuel Miller go, and what happened to him?

Thanks to Jean Walton with help in the search. All communication with me will be acknowledged. Contact Mark Sommer, 1266 Teaneck Road - Apt. 10A Teaneck, New Jersey 07666.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Ancestry.com is at www.Ancestry.com and requires membership – search Miller family trees for Samuel Miller. Some other genealogy sites are free. You may contact Rae Miller (granddaughter & notewriter with any additional information at raez.miller37@gmail.com with a cc: to NJPostalHistory@aol.com .