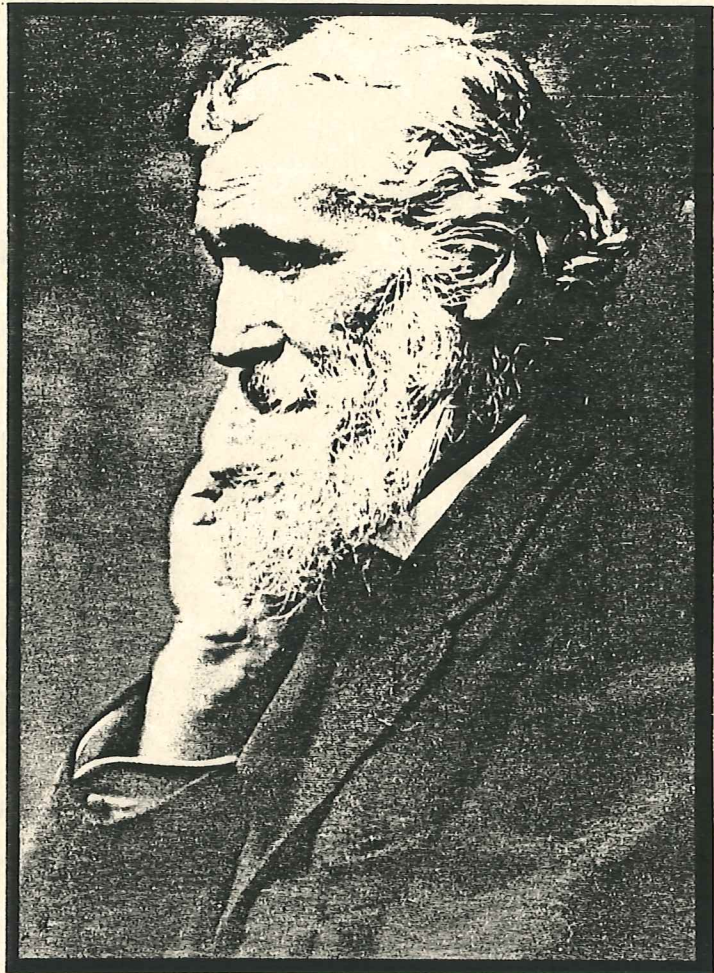


John Muir
1838—1914



*'Climb the mountains and get their good tidings.
Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine
flows into trees. The winds will blow their own
freshness into you, and the storms their energy,
while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.'*

John Muir is remembered for many roles he played in the early conservation history of this country: naturalist, author, explorer, founder of the Sierra Club, and public servant who helped protect many of the wild lands of our country.

Muir spent much of his adult life travelling on foot in North America and took several trips to several other continents as well. He kept vivid journals of his explorations in wilderness areas, many of which formed the basis of his later publications. His efforts to educate and influence public opinion towards wilderness protection are reflected in the many articles he wrote for newspapers and for magazines such as *Century*, *Harper's Monthly*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. He published six books during his lifetime: *The Mountains of California* (1894), *Our National Parks* (1901), *Stickeen* (1909), *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911), *The Yosemite* (1912), and *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (1913). Four others were published after his death: *Travels in Alaska* (1915), *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (1916), *The Cruise of the Corwin* (1917), and *Steep Trails* (1918).

In his later years, Muir became politically active in the preservation of wild lands. He helped to form the Sierra Club and chart its future course in conservation efforts. He wrote letters, made speeches, wrote persuasive articles, lobbied, and shared his philosophy and love of wilderness with presidents and government officials. Eight of our current national parks and several national monuments felt the touch of Muir's influence in their formation.

**The Early
Years
1838-1863**

Born in Dunbar, Scotland

Immigrated with his family to Wisconsin, who established a farm near Portage

Worked on the farm and began a series of inventions of mechanical devices, including an alarm clock that lifted his bed and propelled him out

Studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for almost three years, and invented a student desk which placed opened books in front of him and removed them at regular intervals

**The Wandering
Years
1864-1868**

Travelled on foot through Canada, botanized, and worked for a time in a factory

Travelled to Indiana and worked in an Indianapolis factory

Temporarily blinded in a factory accident; a time of transition in purpose for Muir, resulting in a determination to spend more of his time in the study of nature and less on the study and use of man's inventions

Took a 1000 mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico, wrote his first journal

**The Mountain
Years
1868-1881**

Wandered through California, eventually establishing the Yosemite Valley as his home base, wrote his first California journals

Supported himself first as a shepherd, then as a sawyer

Studied the natural history of the Yosemite, keeping journals that helped form the basis of later books

Acted as Yosemite guide to visiting scientists and writers

Discovered the living glaciers of the Yosemite region and proposed the theory, radical in his day, that the Yosemite Creek Basin was carved by glacial erosion

Published his first article, "Yosemite Glaciers: The Ice Streams of the Great Valley"

Explored the Yosemite, Tulumne, Mt. Whitney, northern and southern Sierra, Wasatch Range of Utah, the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Santa Cruz Mountains; botanized and kept journals

Wrote a series of articles about his travels, including "Studies in the Sierra"

Married Louie Wanda Strenzel, daughter of an expatriate Pole

**The Farming
Years
1881-1891**

Settled with his wife in the San Francisco Bay area where he acquired and worked his own vineyards, earning profits that would help to finance his later explorations

Two daughters born during these years

Made several trips to Alaska, to study glaciers at Glacier Bay, to camp at Muir Glacier, to climb mountains, and to sail to the Arctic

Initiated a campaign with Robert U. Johnson (a **Century** magazine editor) to establish Yosemite National Park, wrote numerous articles on the subject for **Century**

Yosemite National Park Bill passed Congress

**The Political
Activism Years
1892-1914**

Formed the Sierra Club with a group of California conservationists and mountaineers; its purposes stated to be "to explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist support and cooperation...in preserving [them]."

Served as president of Sierra Club from its inception until his death

Worked with the Sierra Club to defeat a bill in Congress which would have threatened the newly formed Yosemite National Park by allowing the exploitation of its resources

Worked with the Sierra Club towards the establishment of forest reserves through the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which resulted in President Harrison setting aside 15 forest reservations

Travelled in Great Britain, Norway, and Switzerland

Published his first book, **The Mountains of California**

Accompanied a National Academy of Sciences committee as an unofficial advisor on an investigation of western public lands; committee recommendations resulted in President Cleveland's addition of 21 million acres to the forest system in 13 individual reserves

Travelled in the American South and Alaska

Spent several days with President Theodore Roosevelt camping in the Yosemite, at Roosevelt's request; and persuaded Roosevelt to set aside the Petrified Forest and Grand Canyon National Monuments

Toured forest lands in Russia, Manchuria, and Japan with Charles Sargent, the Chairman of the National Forestry Commission of 1896

Worked for the transfer of Yosemite Valley from state jurisdiction to inclusion in the Yosemite National Park

Travelled in South America and South Africa

Campaigned against Congress in its proposal to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley, within the Yosemite National Park, which was proposed to provide water and power to San Francisco

Hetch Hetchy legislation passed and the dam was built

Spent his final year completing the manuscript of **Travels in Alaska**

John Muir

1838 - 1914

Naturalist, author, explorer, founder of the Sierra Club, public servant who helped secure the future of several national parks including Yosemite National Park.

Family: Wife, Louie Wanda Stentzel; two children, Annie Wanda and Helen.

Born in Dunbar, Scotland. Eldest son, third of eight children. Father: Daniel Muir, Scotch food-and-grain merchant and later Wisconsin farmer and back country preacher. Mother: Ann Gilyre. Raised Calvinist. Surname Muir means a moor or wild stretch of land in Scottish tongue.

1833 - Daniel Muir weds Ann Gilyre.

1838 - April 21, John Muir born.

1849 - Daniel Muir and 3 of his children (Sarah, David, and John) immigrate to Wisconsin. Established Fountain Lake Farm near Portage. Rest of Muir family joins Daniel in November.

1855 - Daniel purchases Hickory Hill Farm, six miles from Fountain Lake. Family moves to Hickory Hill Farm.

Youth in Wisconsin characterized by hard labor and growing bitterness between the stern Daniel Muir and his eldest son. During this time, Muir nearly succumbs to choke-damp (a mine gas that supports neither life nor flame) while hand chiseling a well on Hickory Hill Farm. Muir also designs wooden clocks, including one alarm clock that lifts his bed and tilts him out at dawn.

University Years

1860 - Leaves Hickory Hill Farm to exhibit clocks at the state agricultural fair in Madison. Befriended by Mrs. Ezra S. Carr whose husband is a professor at the University of Wisconsin.

1861 - Admitted to the college as an 'irregular gent,' a classification that does not earn him a degree. (In 1897, Wisconsin awarded Muir an honorary LL.D. degree. Other honorary degrees were bestowed on him by Harvard, Yale, and the University of California.)

Muir studies geology, Latin, and Greek. He sets up a chemistry lab in his student room in North Hall. Muir continues to invent, including a student desk. The desk can lift a book, open it, and give the student a specified number of minutes to read the lesson and then move the book around before lifting up another one.

Wandering Years

1863 - John leaves the university, planning to enter the medical school at Ann Arbor, Michigan. But his number was not called in the war draft, and Muir chooses to travel instead.

- 1864 - Wanders north into Canada. That winter Muir and his brother Daniel find employment in the firm of Trout and Jay, a broom and rake factory near Meaford, Canada.
- 1865 - Daniel returns to the United States, Muir remains with the factory to improve production from the present machines.
- 1866 - March 1 the factory burns to the ground during a night blizzard, taking with it Muir's notes and collected plants. He travels to Indianapolis. Finds work at Osgood, Smith, and Company, the nation's largest manufacturer of carriage parts. Within weeks rises from saw-operator to foreman. Continues to invent and devise ways to reorganize the line of production. Advocates an eight-hour work day. The company puts these and other ideas of his to work.
- 1867 - Temporarily blinded while working with a piece of machinery. Muir recovers and in September begins his 1,000-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico.
- 1868 - January 9 Muir sails for Cuba, on the Island Belle hoping to eventually explore the Amazon. However, he is unable to book passage to Brazil, and so stays with the Island Belle as it carries a cargo of oranges to New York. March Muir leaves New York, traveling steerage in a ship jammed with emigrants bound for California.

Mountain Years

- March 28 reaches San Francisco, Muir and new-found companion Joseph Chilwell leave for Oakland, the Central Valley, and eventually Yosemite Valley. Spends winter in the foot hills, hearing a band of sheep. Chilwell drifts, but Muir remains to write the first California journals.
- 1869 - Returns to Yosemite area. Herds another band of sheep into the summer range of the Sierra. Writes a journal that later appears as My First Summer in the Sierra. Finds glacial polish. (?)
- 1870 - Works as a sawyer (sawmill) and guide for James Hutchings, who owns a resort near Yosemite Fall. Builds a cabin near the base of Yosemite Falls. Begins to study glaciers. He meets Theresa Yelverton, who becomes enamored with him. Muir, however, keeps his distance.
- 1871 - Guides Boston naturalists around Yosemite. Meets Ralph Waldo Emerson. Concludes Yosemite Creek Basin was carved by glacial erosion and discovers the first "living glacier." Publishes his first article, "Yosemite Glaciers: The Ice Streams of the Great Valley."
- 1872 - Boston Society of Natural History publishes Muir's letters. Reveals the discovery of "living glaciers." Climbs Mt. Ritter. December - spends one week in Oakland (his first excursion from the mountains in two years) - to consult with the Carrs and others about what he should write. Carr introduces him as the "wild man of the woods." Muir returns to Yosemite and writes "A Geologist's Winter Walk."

- 1873 - Year of greatest journal writings. Explores the eastern Yosemite region, Tuolumne, and journeys south to Kings Canyon, climbs Mt. Whitney. Notes the destruction being done to the mountains by sheep and by human "improvements." Spends ten months in Oakland, writing a series of articles including "Studies in the Sierra."
- 1874 - Publishes "Studies in the Sierra" in the Overland Monthly in San Francisco and then returns to Yosemite. Begins journeys to northern and southern Sierra.
- 1875 - Writes for the San Francisco Bulletin. Expands travels throughout the west.
- 1876 - Winter and spring. Stays in the San Francisco home of John Swett to write.
- 1877 - May. Leaves for the Wasatch Range of Utah, the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Yosemite, and the Santa Cruz Mountains. While traveling near Martinez, California, he stays at the home of Dr. John Strenzel, an expatriate Pole. Muir meets Louie Wanda.
- 1879 - June - Proposes to Louie Wanda Strenzel. She accepts.
July - Leaves for Alaska to return seven months later. John sees Glacier Bay.
- 1880 - February. Returns to the Bay area.
April 14 - Weds Louie Wanda.
July - Leaves again for Alaska. Meets Stickeen, a scruff, black dog immortalized in Muir's 1909 story of the same name.
September - Returns to the Bay area.
- 1881 - March 25 - Muir and Louie Wanda's first child, Annie Wanda is born.
May 4 - Sails on the Thomas Corwin to the Arctic Circle. Returns in October.

Farming Years

After his marriage Muir had rented and later bought part of the Strenzel fruit farm. From 1881 to 1891, Muir wrote and traveled little, devoting his energy to developing the farm and making money. By 1891 he had accumulated \$250,000.

- 1886 - A second daughter, Helen is born.
- 1886 - October 6, returns to Kansas City to make peace with his dying father.
- 1889 - Muir takes Robert Underwood Johnson, then an editor of the Century Magazine, on a camping tour of the region of Yosemite Valley and the adjacent Tuolumne watershed. At Johnson's suggestion, they initiate a campaign to establish Yosemite National Park.
- 1890 - The Yosemite National Park Bill passes in Congress. Muir articles in Century had helped sway public opinion.

Years of Political Activism

Sells part of his land. His brother-in-law, John Reid, assumes management of the remaining property. After 1891, begins a life of political activism.

- 1892 - May 28 - In San Francisco, Muir and a group of mountaineers and conservationists form the Sierra Club.
- 1894 - Congress defeats the Caminetti Bill, which threatened the newly created Yosemite National Park. The Sierra Club helped defeat the bill.
- 1896 - Muir accompanies a committee from the National Academy of Sciences on an unofficial basis to investigate certain land under the public domain.
- 1897 - Based on recommendations from the committee, President Cleveland adds 21 million acres to the forest system.
- 1898 - Muir travels to the American South and Alaska.
- 1903 - May 15 - Spends four days in Yosemite with President Theodore Roosevelt. This visit led to the formation of Grand Canyon National Monument and the Petrified Forest National Monument. Shortly after, he leaves for a tour of forest lands in Russia, Manchuria, and Japan with Charles S. Sargent (chairman of the National Forestry Commission of 1896).
- 1905 - January - Muir and the Sierra Club's then secretary William E. Colby journey to Sacramento to begin a season of lobbying.
June 24 - Returns to his ill wife.
August 6 - Louie Wanda dies of lung cancer. Muir did not fully recover from this loss for three years. At that point, the Hetch Hetchy controversy began. San Francisco city officials had cited the Hetch Hetchy gorge of the Tuolumne River as a potential water source. This valley was within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park.
- 1911 - Muir, age 73, travels to South America and South Africa.
- 1912 - Returns to the United States, in good health.
November - Newly elected Woodrow Wilson brings in a new Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane. Lane had long advocated the Hetch Hetchy reservoir.
- 1913 - September - Legislation passes to construct the Hetch Hetchy reservoir. Muir feels defeated.
- 1914 - December - Muir completes the basic manuscript to Travels in Alaska. Visits daughter Helen, now living with her husband and children in the Mojave Desert of Southern California. Muir is already chronically ill.
December 24 - Muir dies in the California hospital in Los Angeles.

Affiliations and Awards

Fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, recipient of honorary degrees from the universities of Harvard, Wisconsin, Yale, and California.

Publications

Muir's books published during his lifetime The Story of My Boyhood and Youth, include: The Mountains of California (1894); Our National Parks (1901); Stickeen (1909); My First Summer in the Sierra (1911); and The Yosemite (1912). Published posthumously were: Travels in Alaska (1915); A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf (1916); Thr Cruise of the Corwin (1917); and Steep Trails (1918).