

THROUGH the efforts of many citizens, including the late Congressman John Baldwin, members of the John Muir Memorial Association, and the Henry Sax and Louis Stein families, the John Muir home was declared a National Historic Site by Congress in 1964. Mr. and Mrs. Sax purchased the home in 1955 to save it from drastic deterioration and vandalism. Land acquisition was completed in 1966 when the National Park Service received title to the five essential properties.

Temporary interpretative services and tours are provided part time by the National Park Service. When park development is finished, these services will be extended to 7 days a week. This development will include a visitor center and a trail around the 8½-acre grounds.

While living in this house from 1890 to 1914, John Muir wrote many of his articles and books on conservation and natural history that made such a notable impact on the public mind. The National Park Service plans to restore the buildings and land to the post-earthquake period of 1906-14. The Muir home, built by the Strentzel family in 1882, will be restored, along with the carriage house and the 1849 Vincente Martinez Adobe where Muir's daughter Wanda and her husband Thomas Hanna lived. The bridge across Franklin Creek and the old dirt roads and trails will be reconstructed, and the windmills, irrigation system, and other historic facilities rebuilt. The orchard and vineyard will be restored to their original appearance to create as faithfully as possible an island of the past in today's suburbia. Research now underway will insure the accuracy and integrity of all repairs and reconstructions.

### ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The life and philosophy of John Muir will be interpreted to visitors by a variety of means as soon as funds and staffing make it possible.

There are picnic facilities in Martinez Municipal Park just northwest of the business district.

### ADMINISTRATION

John Muir National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this site is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great historical, natural, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit of all the people.

A superintendent, whose address is 4451 Canyon Way (The Martinez Adobe), Martinez, Calif. 94553, is in immediate charge of the site.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**, the Nation's principal natural resource agency, has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

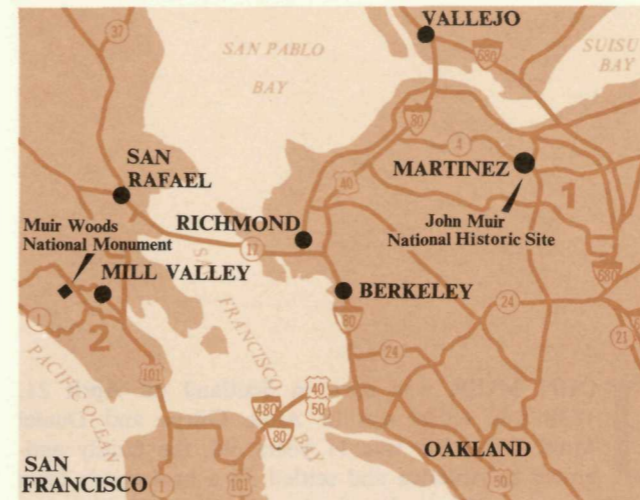


**U. S. Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

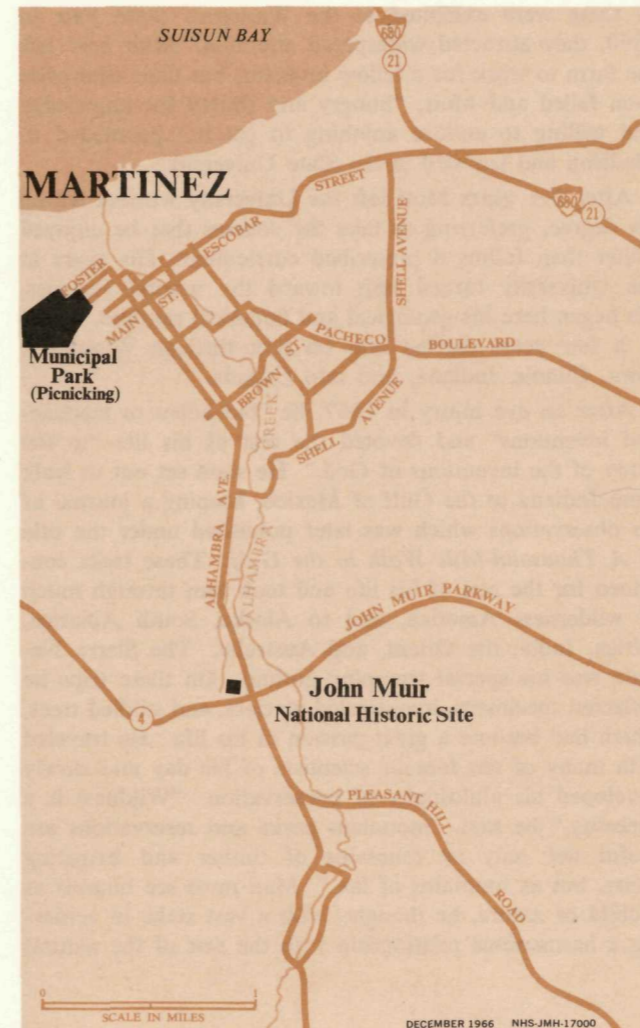


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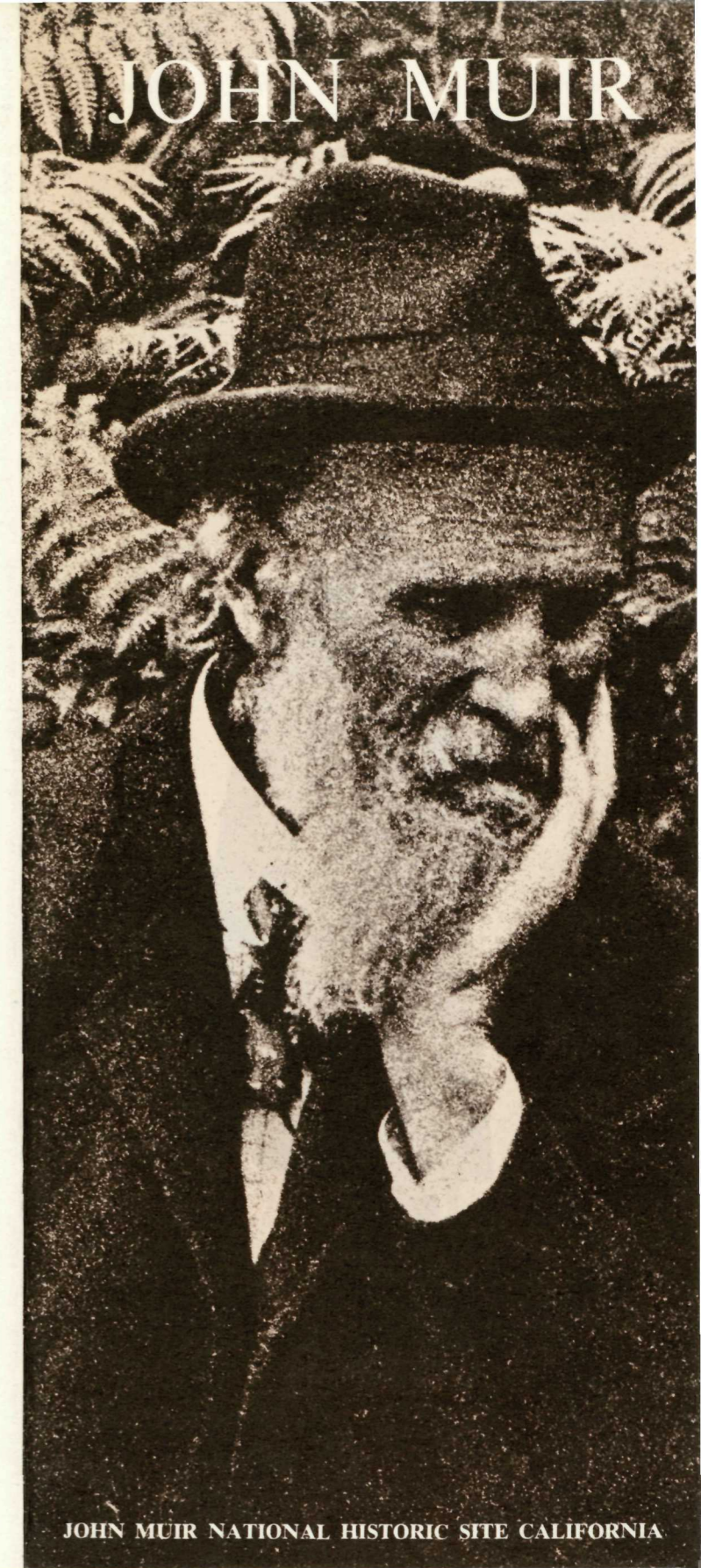
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1 John Muir National Historic Site, the home of John Muir from 1890 to 1914 2 Muir Woods National Monument, a redwoods grove honoring John Muir



# JOHN MUIR



JOHN MUIR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE CALIFORNIA

"The mountains are fountains of men as well as of rivers, of glaciers, of fertile soil. The great poets, philosophers, prophets, able men whose thoughts and deeds have moved the world, have come down from the mountains—mountain-dwellers who have grown strong there with the forest trees in Nature's workshops."



JOHN MUIR 1838-1914

**J**OHN MUIR was born in Scotland on April 21, 1838, the eldest son of Anne Gilrye and Daniel Muir. When he was 11 years old, the family emigrated to America and settled on a backwoods farm in Wisconsin. His boyhood education was sketchy, but he learned well the few lessons that he had. Of a quick and eager mind, he taught himself by reading and observation. John spent his spare time on the farm building a variety of astonishing mechanical devices. When three of these were exhibited at the Wisconsin State Fair in 1860, they attracted widespread attention. Muir now left the farm to work for a fellow inventor, but their enterprise soon failed and Muir, "hungry and thirsty for knowledge and willing to endure anything to get it," proceeded to Madison and enrolled in the State University.

After 2½ years Muir left the University without taking his degree, preferring to take the courses that he enjoyed rather than follow a prescribed curriculum. His years at the University turned him toward the natural sciences. He began here his geological and botanical rambles, which in a few years carried him on foot through Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and into Canada.

After an eye injury in 1867, he "bid adieu to mechanical inventions" and devoted the rest of his life "to the study of the inventions of God." He soon set out to walk from Indiana to the Gulf of Mexico, keeping a journal of his observations which was later published under the title of *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. These treks continued for the rest of his life and took him through much of wilderness America, and to Alaska, South America, Africa, India, the Orient, and Australia. The Sierra Nevada was his special tramping ground. On these trips he collected specimens, investigated glaciers, and studied trees, which had become a great passion in his life. He traveled with many of the famous scientists of his day and slowly developed his philosophy of conservation. "Wildness is a necessity," he said, "mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life." Man must see himself as a child of nature, he thought, with a vast stake in achieving a harmonious relationship with the rest of the natural

world. By 1875 he had resolved to do what he could to make the wilderness better known and loved, so that future generations would cherish a common—and fast dwindling—heritage.

In 1880 John Muir married Louie Strentzel, the only surviving child of Louisiana and John Strentzel, a physician of Alhambra Valley, Calif. An expatriate Pole, Strentzel had emigrated to California in 1849 and eventually settled near Martinez, where he became a noted horticulturist and large landowner. Two years after the marriage, the Strentzels turned over their original ranchhouse to the Muirs and built a new and larger home on the northern part of the ranch. When Dr. Strentzel died in 1890, the Muirs moved into the "big house." (It was here that Muir lived during the last 24 years of his life.)

Over the next decade Muir succeeded so handsomely at his new livelihood of fruit growing that he was able to provide permanently for his wife and two daughters, Wanda and Helen, while devoting the rest of his life to travel and study.

A competent scientist and author, Muir above all was an inspired conservationist. He associated with John Burroughs, John Tyndall, Asa Gray, and Sir Joseph Hooker. The botanist Gray, to whom Muir sent many new specimens of flora, named one plant in his honor, *Ivesia Muirii*. As a geologist and glaciologist, he subscribed to Louis Agassiz's theories. Muir discovered a number of living glaciers in Yosemite and was the first to demonstrate that the relentless grinding of glaciers, not a catastrophe, sculptured the Yosemite-type valleys of the Sierra Nevada. He extended his observations to glaciers in the Cascades and Alaska, discovering and describing one which now bears his name.

During the 1870's Muir wrote his first magazine and newspaper articles which had such a profound effect on the public mind. He first dealt with glaciers and glacial theory. Then, switching to conservation, he wrote many persuasive articles which advocated the saving of this country's natural resources and the establishment of national parks and forest reserves. In all his writings, he remained the basic naturalist and lover of nature.

Muir made his most lasting contribution as a conservationist. He believed that trees and forests should be saved both for their use as watersheds and as places of solitude and wilderness "where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike." He worked long and hard for legislation that would set aside forest reserves and parks. His articles, books, and public proposals were instrumental in establishing the U.S. Forest Service, Yosemite National Park, Sequoia National Park, Mount Rainier National Park, Petrified Forest National Monument, and part of Grand Canyon National Monument. Muir was one of the architects of the Congressional act of 1891 authorizing forest reserves.

Muir's first book, *The Mountains of California*, published in 1894, aroused conservation sentiment and led directly to an upsurge of determination to preserve the Nation's forests. Six years later, at a time when special interests were seeking to annul the forest reservations established by President Grover Cleveland, Muir published an article on "The American Forests" in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Transforming a dry Government report into a literary gem, he passionately advocated that the forests should be saved and passed on to succeeding generations undiminished in beauty. "Every other civilized nation in the world," he declared, "has been compelled to care for its forests. Our government on the other hand, like a rich and foolish spendthrift, has allowed its heritage to be sold and plundered and wasted at will." When President Theodore Roosevelt toured Yosemite in 1903, Muir seized the occasion to expound his views on national parks and forests. In the remainder of Roosevelt's Presidency more than 148 million acres of national forests, 23 national monuments, and 5 national parks were added to the Nation's system of forests and parks. "His work was not sectional but for the whole people," one contemporary said, "and he was the real father of the forest reservation system of America."

Today, as populations multiply, resources diminish, and emerging nations recognize the need to conserve their great natural places, John Muir's legacy becomes more relevant than ever to the needs of our time.