



FEASIBILITY REPORT  
JOHN MUIR HOME AND  
VICENTE MARTINEZ ADOBE  
MARTINEZ CALIFORNIA

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Martinez, California

National Park Service

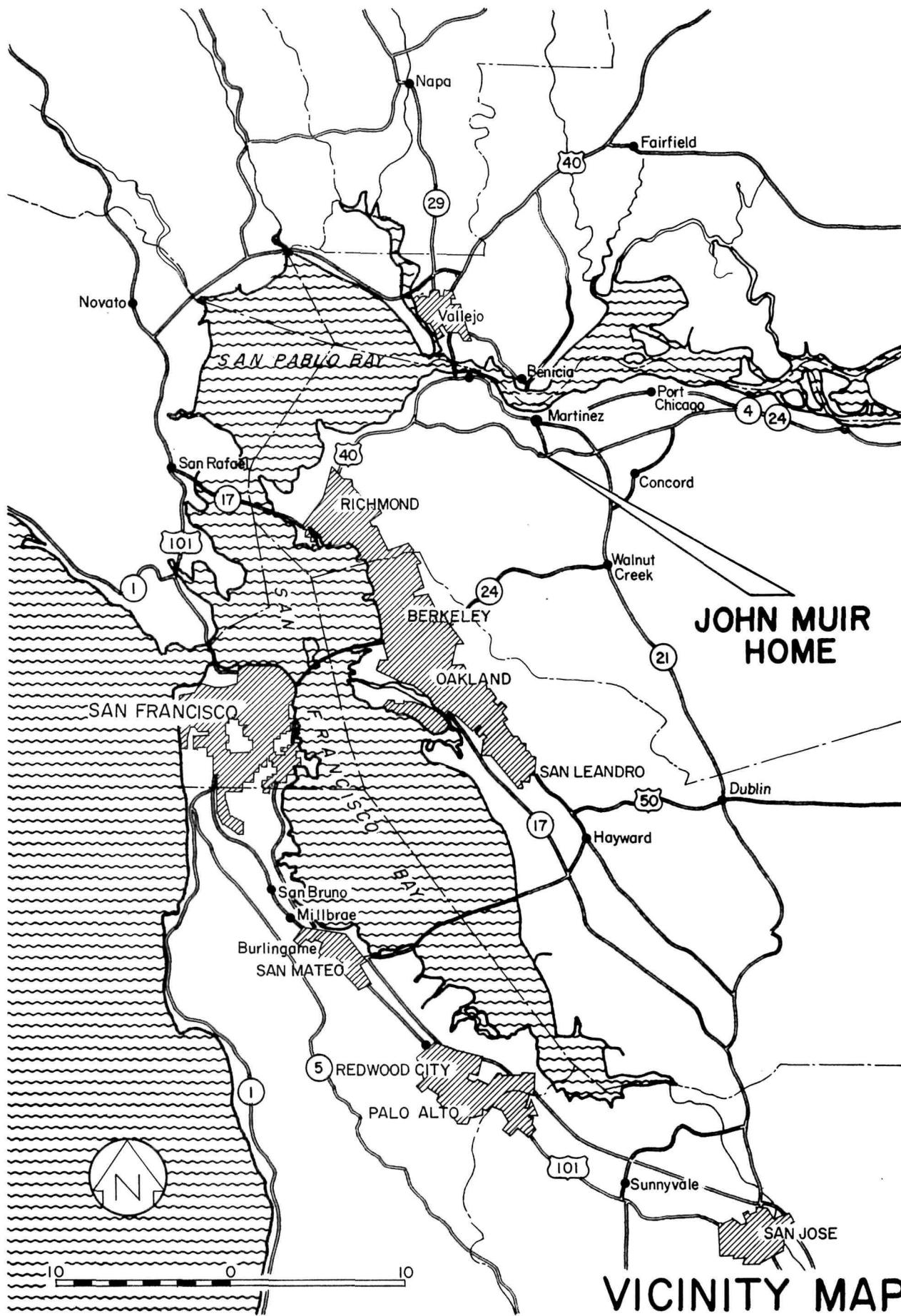
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Western Regional Office

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**JOHN MUIR HOME**

**VICINITY MAP**

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## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

1. Significance. The Secretary of the Interior has already determined the John Muir Home to be of exceptional value as illustrating the literary history of the United States. The structure also has been recommended to the Advisory Board as being of similar value in commemorating the theme, "Conservation of Natural Resources." John Muir undoubtedly was one of the most significant figures in the early history of the park and conservation movement; and the Muir Home is where he did his most productive work as a writer and a conservationist.

The related Martinez Adobe, while it is an excellent example of an early California Mexican-style ranch house, is important from a national standpoint principally because it was a vital part of the scene of the Muir Home property at the time Muir lived there. Without it, the presentation of the historic setting of the Muir Home would be much less effective.

2. Logical balance between themes in historical areas of the National Park System. No existing unit in the National Park System commemorates an outstanding personality in either the field of literature or the field of conservation.

3. Integrity. The site possesses a high degree of integrity. In essence, the structure, its landscaping, and its setting are as they were in Muir's time.

Although planned construction of a freeway adjacent to the south boundary of the area will intrude into the setting, it will not materially effect the integrity of the site. Careful planting, both that planned by the State Highway Department and that possible on the projected Monument, will help screen traffic noise and will minimize visual disturbance.

4. Suitability (Adaptability to effective treatment). The Muir Home and its setting as described in H.R. 439 would be entirely suitable for National Historic Site purposes if certain minor boundary adjustments were made.

The area is of limited size, but it is adequate to preserve the historic setting of the Muir Home and to permit adequate interpretation and an uncomplicated administrative and visitor use development.

5. Feasibility and Availability. Land acquisition problems would be few. The property described in H. R. 439, plus another intervening parcel, are under option to the trustees of the two organizations interested in the preservation of the inherent historic values and would thus be immediately available. The cost of acquiring this property would be very reasonable.

To protect more adequately the setting and character of the Muir Home, it would be highly desirable, in fact practically essential, to obtain two additional small parcels (parcels 4 and 5 on map at end of volume) on the east of the proposed Monument area. These parcels are owned by a subdivider, are zoned as commercial property; and acquisition would be more costly on a per acre basis but not prohibitively expensive.

Use of the area as a National Monument is entirely feasible. All utilities are available, and employee housing can be provided by the adjacent community. Access would be from the adjacent highway, which provides convenient circulation to and from a large metropolitan area.

6. Maintenance. The site and structures would present no unusual maintenance problems. The repair and restoration of the Muir Home and the Martinez Adobe, while moderately expensive, would not be prohibitive. The costs of staffing, operating, and maintaining a National Monument at the Muir Home would be no more than for comparable structures in the National Park System.

7. Urgency. Action necessary to preserve this significant area should be taken as soon as possible. The option on the two major parcels expires May 1, 1964. The surrounding land is being rapidly urbanized, and the pressures to engulf the Muir property in this type of development will increase when the adjacent freeway is completed in 1966. The present owners cannot long resist the economic pressures being put upon them for the commercial and residential development of the property.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Name and Location

John Muir National Historic Site (proposed),  
Martinez, Contra Costa County, California, at the  
junction of Alhambra Avenue and California State Highway  
4.

### B. Synopsis of History

The John Muir House was the home of the naturalist and conservationist, John Muir, during the last twenty-four years of his life. This period, from 1890 to 1914, witnessed the production of the greater part of his published writings--and all of his books--which have been termed "classics in the nature literature of the world"; and it was the time of his greatest effectiveness as a leader in the fight to preserve scenic, scientific, and forest resources. The achievements which have caused some people to describe him as the "Father of our National Parks and Forest Reservations" were largely accomplished during the years when he lived in this structure.

Muir's connection with the Alhambra Valley property may, with some justice, be traced back to the 1850's, when Dr. Strentzel, a Polish exile and pioneer California horticulturalist, established a ranch there. In 1880 John Muir, already a well-known naturalist and writer, married Dr. Strentzel's daughter, Louie, and moved to the ranch. It was to remain his home for the rest of his life.

In 1882 the Strentzels turned their house over to the Muirs and moved to a large new residence (the present John Muir Home) about a mile down the Cañada del Hambre. Muir leased, and later bought, a part of the Strentzel property; and during the next decade he devoted himself with industry and skill to fruit raising. By 1890 he was financially independent and in a position to devote his remaining years to scientific studies, travel, writing, and furthering the conservation of forest and scenic resources.

Dr. Strentzel died in October 1890, and the Muirs moved into the big house at the invitation of Mrs. Strentzel. Although Muir was often away on trips, much of his published

writing was produced in his "old library den" on the second floor of the Muir Home. Here he met with leaders in the conservation field and helped to plan the moves which saved the forest reservations created by President Cleveland, which brought about the retrocession of Yosemite Valley to the Federal Government, and which resulted in the establishment of the Sierra Club. Here he conducted his long and unsuccessful fight to save Hetch Hetchy.

After Muir's death in 1914 the house and the surrounding property went to his two daughters. Over the years the ranch was broken into parcels and sold. The house went out of the family in 1919 and since has had a succession of owners.

The Vicente Martinez Adobe, situated about 200 yards west of the Muir House, was built about 1849 by Vicente Martinez, a son of the original grantee of Rancho El Pinole. The house was part of the Strentzel Ranch and evidently was used as a sort of headquarters for the managers. It has been said that the Strentzels lived in it for a time. Muir's daughter, Wanda, and her family lived there for a number of years after her marriage, but eventually this property, too, was sold. It went into a different ownership from that of the Muir House.

### C. Background and Purpose of Study

The proposal to preserve the John Muir Home in public ownership as a memorial to Muir and as a means of commemorating his contributions to the conservation of natural resources is a longstanding one. At present, the origins of the movement are but dimly understood.

It is sometimes stated that John Muir wished the house to go to the Sierra Club upon his death. That organization is said to have rejected the gift, however, because of the anticipated expense of maintenance and because it was felt that the structure would not afford a fireproof repository for Muir's papers, books, and other relics.<sup>1/</sup>

As early as 1938 a "John Muir Association" was in existence.<sup>2/</sup> Ten years later five interested persons met

<sup>1/</sup>Our Heritage and Our Tribute (mimeographed broadside issue for Fourth Annual John Muir Memorial Association Festival, Martinez, April 1960)

<sup>2/</sup>Report of Investigation, John Muir Home (typescript, California Div. of Beaches & Parks, September 26, 1952),

in Martinez to work for the preservation of the house. In 1952 this group, augmented and reorganized, and supported by Mr. William E. Colby and other members of the Sierra Club and by a number of prominent California citizens, urged the California Division of Beaches and Parks to assume ownership and administration of the structure as a part of the State Park System. 1/

The Division of Beaches and Parks made a study of the Muir Home. The report, dated September 26, 1952, concluded that acquisition and development costs would be prohibitive, and evidently because of this report the State Division of Beaches and Parks did not take action to preserve the area.

Expanding suburban development in Contra Costa County threatened to engulf the Muir Home. In order "to block its destruction by a proposed subdivision," as well as to have a "potential retirement project," Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax bought the home in 1955 for \$23,000.2/

That event gave renewed impetus to the movement to place the property in public ownership, since Mr. and Mrs. Sax were actively interested in seeing that the Muir Home should be preserved. Beginning in 1956, they have worked closely with the John Muir Memorial Association (formally organized on April 27, 1956) and the Contra Costa County Historical Society to obtain support which would assure perpetual care for the Muir Home. 3/

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<sup>1</sup> E. E. Powell (Land Planner, Div. of Beaches & Parks) memorandum to Newton B. Drury (Chief, Div. of Beaches & Parks), September 26, 1952, MS, in Division of Beaches & Parks.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Morgan, "Muir Home May Become National Monument," in Oakland Tribune (Oakland, California, January 21, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Another attempt was made to have the property taken into the State Park System. At its meeting on April 12, 1957, the State Park Commission declined to recommend this proposal. <sup>1/</sup> The State Legislature, however, passed an act authorizing the purchase of the site; but the measure was vetoed by Governor Goodwin J. Knight. <sup>2/</sup>

During January 1958, the Contra Costa County Planning Department prepared a drawing of a "Proposed Historical Park Site" at Martinez which included the Muir Home property and the intervening lands west to Franklin Canyon Road. This proposal for a county park was made in conjunction with the Contra Costa County Historical Society and the John Muir Memorial Association; but there was no tangible result.

Since that time the efforts of the preservation groups have been largely directed toward obtaining Federal ownership and administration for the property. By 1960 an organization called the "Muir Home National Shrine" was working actively with the John Muir Memorial Association and the Contra Costa County Historical Society toward this end. During that year these groups stimulated a correspondence campaign urging the Secretary of the Interior to assist in establishing the Muir Home as a "National Shrine, park, or monument."

A number of prominent individuals and influential organizations supported the campaign. Among the groups endorsing the project or writing to the Department of the Interior during 1960 and 1961 were the California Heritage Council, the California Federated Women's Clubs, the California Conservation Council, the City Council of the

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from minutes of Meeting of State Park Commission, San Francisco, April 12, 1957, typescript in Division of Beaches and Parks files.

<sup>2</sup> John W. Winkley to Roger Ernst, Walnut Creek, March 8, 1960, copy in N 3, Western Regional Office files; Morgan, op. cit.

City of Martinez, the Conference of California Historical Societies, the California Historical Society, the Wilderness Society, the Martinez Board of Realtors, the American Institute of Decorators, the Contra Costa Hills Club, the Golden Gate Audubon Society, and the Sierra Club.

The Department replied to these letters with the information that the Muir Home was being studied as part of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. Until the consideration of sites under Theme XIX, The Conservation of Natural Resources, could be completed and reviewed by the Advisory Board, said the replies, "the Department will not be ready to state its position on the proposal." 1/

Meanwhile, another element had entered into the situation. A nearby tract of land, containing about 3.85 acres and on which was situated the old Vicente Martinez Adobe, came on the market early in 1955. This property had been a part of the Strentzel ranch and, later, of the Muir ranch. To save this historic structure from subdivisions, Mr. and Mrs. Louis L. Stein, Jr., purchased it on February 9, 1955. Evidently it was intended to use it as a museum for the Contra Costa County Historical Society; but nothing came of this plan, and the property has since been rented for residential purposes. 2/ On February 1, 1961, Mr. Stein purchased another tract of about one acre situated between the Muir Home site and the adobe property in order that subdivisions or roads might not separate the two sections of the old ranch.

Since both the Saxes and Steins were in favor of preservation and were willing to sell their properties for historical monument purposes, it thus became practicable to suggest the creation of a John Muir National Monument

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<sup>1</sup> For an example, see John A. Carver, Jr., (Assistant Secretary) to the Rev. J. Marvin Davis, September 15, 1961, copy in NPS, Western Regional Office files.

<sup>2</sup> Oakland Tribune, February 13, 1955

which would include the Muir Home property and the Martinez Adobe property and the intervening lands. Such a proposal was essentially the same in area as that discussed with the county in 1958.

A bill to establish a John Muir National Monument was introduced in Congress by Representative John Baldwin on January 10, 1962. Strangely enough this measure, H. R. 9492, 87th Congress, did not provide for the acquisition of the .97-acre tract lying between the Muir and the Martinez Adobe properties. The Department of the Interior recommended that action on this bill should be deferred until the site could be evaluated by the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings and until the Advisory Board should submit its evaluation as to whether the Muir House and the Martinez Adobe should be included in the National Park System. Congress took no action on the proposed legislation.

While this measure was pending in Congress, the National Park Service was investigating the site in connection with the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. subtheme study on "Literature, Drama, and Music," a part of Theme XX. At its 47th Meeting, October 15-17, 1962, the Advisory Board considered the Muir Home in connection with this subtheme and evaluated the site as being of exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States and as being eligible for Registered National Historic Landmark status. This recommendation was approved by the Secretary of the Interior on December 29, 1962.

On January 9, 1963, Representative Baldwin re-introduced his bill to establish the John Muir National Monument: This bill also excludes the .97-acre tract between the Muir and Martinez Adobe properties. On January 18, 1963, Acting Director Tolson of the National Park Service requested the Western Regional Office to prepare a Suitability and Feasibility Study in relation to the area proposed by Mr. Baldwin's H. R. 439. The present report is the result of that request.

## II Historical Significance.

### A. Identification

There is no question concerning the identification of the John Muir House. Many persons now alive, including one of Muir's daughters, Helen, remember the home as it was when the naturalist lived in it, and they remember him living in it. His daughter, in fact, has left a detailed description of each room as it appeared during the Muir family occupancy. There are in existence a number of photographs showing Muir on the porches and grounds of the house; and Muir biographies contain many references to his moving into, and his occupancy of, the house, which was owned while he lived in it by his father-in-law, then by his mother-in-law, then by his wife, then by his daughters, and then, from 1912 to 1914, by Muir himself.

Most conclusive, perhaps, are Muir's own words on the subject. On May 1, 1912, he wrote a letter to Mrs. Anna R. Dickey in which he described his lonely life in the house after the death of his wife as follows:

I'm in my old library den, the house desolate,  
nobody living in it save a hungry mouse or two  
. . . . [I hold] dearly cherished memories about  
it and the fine garden grounds full of trees and  
bushes and flowers that my wife and father-in-  
law and I planted--fine things from every land.<sup>1</sup>

A year later he told another friend, "Wanda is living on the ranch in the old adobe, while I am alone in my library den in the big house on the hill . . . ." <sup>2</sup>

The chain of title, as established from the records of Contra Costa County, reveals the following series of property transfers for the Muir Home and the 4.83-acre tract on which it stands from the time of the distribution of the estate of Dr. Strenzel (Muir's father-in-law) until the property came into the possession of its present owners:

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<sup>1</sup>William Frederic Badè, The Life and Letters of John Muir (2 vols., Boston, 1924), II, 375.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 383.

September 17, 1892. Estate of John T. Strentzel, deceased, to Louisiana E. Strentzel (wife) and Louie Strentzel Muir (daughter) (Distributions at Death, Book 1, p.142) (transfers 106 acres in 2 parcels).

May 18, 1897. Louisiana E. Strentzel to Louie Strentzel Muir [wife of John Muir] (Deeds, Book 76, p. 149) (transfers all interest in property received from estate of John T. Strentzel).

July 11, 1905. Louie Strentzel Muir to Wanda Muir and Helen Muir (daughters) (Deeds, Book 112, p. 415) (transfers all land of grantor).

May 13, 1908. Wanda Muir Hanna [daughter of John Muir and wife of Thomas Hanna] to Helen Muir (Deeds, Book 137, p. 157) (This deed and all those that follow refer to the parcel of 4.83 acres known as the "Muir Homestead").

April 29, 1912. Helen Muir Funk and Buel A. Funk [daughter and son-in-law of John Muir] to John Muir (Deeds, Book 178, p. 503).

July 13, 1916. Estate of John Muir, deceased,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to Wanda Muir Hanna and  $\frac{1}{2}$  to Helen Muir Funk (Deeds, Book 273, p. 18).

January 22, 1919. Undivided  $\frac{1}{2}$  interest, Helen Muir Funk and Buel A. Funk to A. L. Irish (Deeds, Book 273, p.67; Book 332, p.214).

March 24, 1919. A. L. Irish and Mary Irish to Wanda Muir Hanna (Deeds, Book 333, p. 344).

March 28, 1919. Wanda Muir Hanna and Thomas R. Hanna to Constance C. Schoolcraft (Deeds, Book 333, p. 345).

October 25, 1921. Constance C. Schoolcraft to William B. Waldron (Deeds, Book 377, p. 499).

February 13, 1923. William B. Waldron to Henry J. Curry (Deeds, Book 432, p. 207).

April 21, 1930. Estate of Henry J. Curry, deceased, to Millie E. Curry.

October 5, 1937. Millie E. Curry to Nellie Kreiss.

September 16, 1946. Estate of Nellie Kreiss, deceased, to Andrew J. Kreiss and Barbara E. Kreiss.

January 24, 1955. Andrew J. Kreiss and Barbara E. Schulz (formerly Barbara E. Kreiss) to Henry V. Sax and Faire S. Sax [present owners] (Official Records, Book 2463, p. 5).

The identification of the Vicente Martinez Adobe is not a major consideration in the present study, because the historical significance of the proposed National Monument is based entirely upon the importance of John Muir and the John Muir Home. The Martinez Adobe and the land accompanying it are not being considered for inclusion in the proposed Monument because of their own intrinsic historical value but because they are essential to preserve the historic scene of the Muir Home, to provide a suitable setting for it, to protect the main site from additional encroachment, and to provide space and facilities for administrative and interpretive developments.

However, the Martinez house was an important part of the scene at the Muir Home and was closely associated with the Strentzel ranch and with the Muir family. This association can be documented in part, although the time available for this study did not permit the establishment of a complete chain of title by use of the county records. Due to the bewildering number of deeds, leases, quitclaim deeds, mortgages, and other recorded transactions relating to this property, and due to the fact that the tract was often included in larger areas which were the subjects of recorded transactions, the establishment of a complete chain of title will be a task of considerable magnitude.

But the main outlines of the property ownership seem clear. On December 1, 1874, Elizabeth Redfern, wife of Thomas Redfern, deeded her interest in a tract of 40.48 acres (which included the Martinez Adobe and, evidently, the site of the future Muir Home, also) to Dr. John Strentzel. Eight days later Thomas Redfern also deeded the same tract to Dr. Strentzel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Contra Costa County, Deeds, Book 27, pp. 321, 322.

Dr. Strentzel continued to own this tract until his death in 1890. Because it was once part of a large ranch owned by Edward Franklin, this property was known to the Strentzels as "the Franklin place."<sup>1</sup>

When Dr. Strentzel's estate was distributed, this property was included in two tracts totalling 106 acres which were transferred on September 17, 1892, to Mrs. Strentzel and Louie Strentzel Muir, wife of John Muir.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Strentzel deeded her interest in the property to her daughter, Louie, on May 18, 1897; and she, in turn, deeded all her land to her two daughters, Wanda and Helen Muir, on July 11, 1905.<sup>3</sup>

On May 13, 1908, Wanda Muir Hanna deeded her interest in the "Muir Homestead" tract of 4.83 acres--the "Big House" or "John Muir Home" property--to her sister Helen.<sup>4</sup> From this point the legal history of the Martinez Adobe property becomes separated from that of the "Muir Homestead" tract. Exactly when the former property passed out of the hands of Muir's daughters has not yet been determined. When trace of it is next found in the county records--which have not been completely searched during the present investigation--D. L. Thornbury and Alpha E. Thornbury gave a quitclaim deed to F. D. Prettyman on June 12, 1918.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, Diary, 1868-1882, MS, entry for February 15, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> Contra Costa County, Distributions at Death, Book 1, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> Deeds, Book 76, p. 149; Book 112, p. 415.

<sup>4</sup> Deeds, Book 137, p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Book 316, p. 491.

There then follows a long and complicated series of quitclaim deeds which seem to have terminated on February 9, 1920, when the Earl Fruit Company transferred the property to James Rennie.<sup>1</sup> On November 9, 1921, James Rennie and Bertha C. Rennie deeded the property to Daniel L. Parsowith.<sup>2</sup> Between that date and 1954 the tract passed back and forth several times between members of the Parsowith family, finally returning to Daniel L. Parsowith's ownership on October 26, 1954.<sup>3</sup> Parsowith sold the property on February 11, 1955, to Louis L. Stein, Jr., et ux., the present owner.<sup>4</sup>

B. Historical Narrative

Position of John Muir (1838-1914) in United States history. From the standpoint of national historical significance, the relative importance of the John Muir Home and of all the property proposed for inclusion in a John Muir National Monument is dependent upon their association with the naturalist, author, and conservationist, John Muir. Such other historical values as the site possesses are strictly of local or State significance.

Muir's position as a scientist seems not yet to have been completely evaluated. Scottish born and Wisconsin bred, he began botanizing as a young man in the Old Northwest, in Canada, and through the Southeast, but his real contributions to knowledge began after he reached the Sierra Nevada of California in 1868. Interested in "all the life and phenomena of the natural world," he gave his "most enthusiastic and continuous study to glaciers and forests."

Although not the first to note evidence of glaciers in Yosemite, Muir "was the first to demonstrate the origin

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<sup>1</sup>Deeds, Book 316, pp. 479, 481, 491; Book 322, p. 163; Book 359, pp. 165, 168, 431.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Book 403, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Book 404, p. 273; 290 O.R. 359; 2406 O.R. 421.

<sup>4</sup>2474 O.R. 407.

of the Yosemite Valley by glacial erosion."<sup>1</sup> In so doing he opposed the expressed opinions of some of the most eminent geologists of his time, but Muir's theories are considered, in general, to be sound to this day. He is credited with discovering the living glaciers of the Sierra Nevada, and he explained their impact on the landscape. He also discovered and explored several of the great ice fields of Alaska.<sup>2</sup>

He is recognized as the discoverer of "many new plants and insects"; and his knowledge, based on intensive and extensive observation, was freely placed at the disposal of a number of the great scientists of the day. For instance, he contributed information to Charles S. Sargent's monumental Silva, and he sent floral specimens to Asa Gray.<sup>3</sup> But the extent of his contributions to science apparently has not yet been appraised.

Muir was perhaps more important as an interpreter of nature than as a scientist. By the spring of 1871 he had found his life's work. "As long as I live," he wrote in his journal, "I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can."<sup>4</sup>

He began to write for publication in 1871, his first article, "The Death of a Glacier," appearing in the New York Tribune. Soon his works were appearing in the Overland Monthly, the San Francisco Bulletin, Harper's, and other periodicals. One of his articles, "The Humming Bird of the California Waterfalls," a description of the water ouzel, was called by David Starr Jordan, the "finest bird biography in existence."<sup>5</sup> Many of his articles were later incorporated

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<sup>1</sup>W. F. Badè, "John Muir," in Dictionary of American Biography, XIII (New York, 1934), 315.

<sup>2</sup>John W. Winkley, John Muir, Naturalist: A Concise Biography of the Great Naturalist (Nashville, Tenn., 1959), 140; James I. Clark, John Muir . . . Wanderer (Madison, Wisconsin, 1957), 14.

<sup>3</sup>Winkley, op. cit., 140; Wolfe, op. cit., 159.

<sup>4</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 144.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 198.

into the ten books which came from his pen; but much of the writing for these latter works was new. Stickeen, about his canine companion on Alaska trails, is one of the world's most popular dog stories.

Muir's writings, said his biographer, William Frederick Badé, were marked by "the irresistable charm of simplicity" and "the directness of poetical feeling and perception." He had, said Dr. Badé, "the eye within the eye" which placed him among "the great few who have won title to remembrance as prophets and interpreters of nature . . . . Thousands and thousands, hereafter, who go to the mountains, streams, and cañons of California will choose to see them through the eyes of John Muir, and they will see more deeply because they see with his eyes."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bade may have exaggerated slightly when he said that Muir, at the time of his death, was "not only foremost among the nature writers of America, but in many respects the most distinguished figure among contemporary men of letters." But he was correct when he added, "It will take more than this hasteful, fretful generation to take the measure of his greatness, and to explore the sources of his power."<sup>2</sup>

Muir's significant place in American literature was recognized by the Advisory Board when at its 47th Meeting, in October, 1962, during its consideration of the National Survey subtheme, "Literature, Drama, and Music," it evaluated the Muir Home as possessing exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States.

The Muir Home will again be considered by the Advisory Board in connection with Theme XIX, "Conservation of Natural Resources." It has been recommended as being of exceptional value in connection with this theme also.

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<sup>1</sup> William Frederic Badé, introduction to John Muir, The Story of My Boyhood and Youth (Boston and New York, 1916), viii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

There can be no doubt that John Muir was one of the most important leaders in the conservation movement in the United States. As early as the 1870's he wrote an article for a San Francisco newspaper on the havoc being caused in his beloved Yosemite by ranchers, sheepmen, tourists, and resort owners. In 1881 he helped draft two Congressional bills, one providing for the enlargement of the State Park at Yosemite and the other for the establishment of a public park in the southern Sierra. Although neither bill got out of committee, they demonstrate Muir's early interest in the park movement.<sup>1</sup>

In 1876 he proposed a national commission to investigate the destruction of forests and to survey existing forest resources. Nothing came of this suggestion at the time, however.<sup>2</sup> But his real work as a conservationist on a national scale began in 1889 when Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of Century Magazine, visited California looking for articles. Muir showed Johnson the damage being done to Yosemite under State control, and the editor suggested that Muir write two articles advocating a national park surrounding the valley. These articles and other writings by Muir were influential in the establishment in 1890 of "forest reservations" around Yosemite and protecting the Fresno-Tulare Grove of Big Trees, and in creating Sequoia National Park.

Muir was one of the principal advisers to the framers of the first act authorizing forest reserves in 1891; and when, in 1896, his pioneering idea of a Federal Commission to study forests became a reality, he was invited to accompany the new body during its field studies. Muir contributed "ideas and inspiration" to the Commission's report which, in turn, influenced President Cleveland to establish 13 forest reserves in 1897.

Timber interests opened a full-scale attack upon these reservations, seeking to have them returned to the public domain. Muir entered with fervor into this contest, calling it a struggle "between landscape righteousness and the devil."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, op. cit., 227-228.

<sup>2</sup> D.A.B., XIII, 316.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Two brilliant articles by him which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly and in Harper's Weekly during the summer of 1897 are generally credited with arousing public sentiment for conservation and thereby thwarting the predatory assaults. Muir's contributions at this time, says one of his biographers, made him "the acknowledged leader of the forest conservation movement in the United States."<sup>1</sup>

During a camping trip in Yosemite with President Roosevelt in 1903, Muir had an opportunity to point out in his persuasive manner the need for national forests and national parks. Roosevelt's speeches immediately after this meeting demonstrate that Muir's efforts bore fruit. During the next six years the President set aside 148,000,000 acres of new forest reservations, established 16 national monuments, and doubled the number of national parks. Of course, there were other factors involved in bringing about these achievements, but "Muir's informed enthusiasm played an imponderable but influential part."<sup>2</sup> Muir lent his pen and his support to the establishment of the U. S. Forest Service and to the transfer of the Federal forest reserves to that agency, 1901-1905.

From the time of the establishment of Yosemite National Park in 1890, Muir, Johnson, and other conservationists worked tirelessly to have the valley itself receded to the Federal Government to permit the completion of an effective park. Despite Muir's writings, which aroused nationwide support for the cause, the enemies of the measure succeeded in blocking it until 1906. In the end, John Muir has been credited with the political strategy which brought about the necessary legislation both in Sacramento and in Washington.<sup>3</sup>

After the death of his wife in 1905, Muir turned for a while to the study of petrified forests. On his recommendation, Petrified Forest National Monument was set aside in 1906; and as a result of his explorations, "the Blue Forest, Black Forest, and part of what became Grand Canyon National Park were all reserved for the public to enjoy."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.A.B., XIII.; See also Wolfe, op. cit., 272-277; Robert Underwood Johnson, Remembered Yesterdays (Boston, 1923), 299.

<sup>2</sup>D.A.B., XIII, 316.

<sup>3</sup>Clark, John Muir, 17-18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 18.

His last great conservation fight was the years-long struggle to protect the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite from use as a reservoir. This battle was lost in 1913; but, it has been said, "one result of his leadership of the opposition was the consolidation of public sentiment against possible repetition of such a raid."<sup>1</sup>

In summary, it seems undisputable that during the period from 1889 to 1914, particularly, John Muir "played a critical and vital role in the drive to establish national parks, national forests, and to apply scientific methods of sustained-yield management to the national forests."<sup>2</sup>

In view of the studies already made by the Service, it does not seem necessary to enter into more detail here concerning the importance of Muir in the history of the United States. Also, the present study makes no attempt to present a biography of John Muir, since adequate biographies are readily available. The historical narrative which follows, therefore, confines itself to establishing the association of John Muir with the Muir House and with the related property.

The Strentzel Ranch. In tracing John Muir's association with the Muir Home property, it appears convenient to begin with the establishment of his father-in-law, Dr. John T. Strentzel, in the Alhambra Valley. John Theophile Strentzel was the son of a prominent Polish doctor. At an early age he became involved in a political plot against the Russian rulers of his mother country and fled to Hungary, where he studied viticulture and also received a medical degree from the University of Pesth. He came to the United States in 1840 and soon settled in Texas. He married Louisiana Erwin, of Tennessee, and in 1849 brought her and their small daughter overland to the gold fields of California.

Dr. Strentzel first opened a store near LaGrange on the Mother Lode, and later he established a cattle ranch on the Merced River, only to be wiped out by a flood. While visiting Benicia in 1853 he heard of the fertile Cañada del Hambre across Carquinez Strait in what is now Contra Costa County. He examined the land and decided that it was ideally suited for growing grapes and other fruit.

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<sup>1</sup>D.A.B., XIII, 316.

<sup>2</sup>National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Theme XIX Study: Conservation of Natural Resources (mimeographed, NPS, Western Region, 1963), 187.

From the Martinez family, heirs of the original grantee, he bought a small portion of Rancho El Pinole, a vast tract of about 17,754 acres stretching westward from Cañada del Hambre, which runs through the present town of Martinez, to San Pablo Bay; and on April 4, 1853, he brought his family to their new home. According to tradition, he sent east for the lumber with which to build the house which still stands on the west side of Arroyo del Hambre about a mile upstream from the present Muir Home.

Dr. Strentzel first concentrated his efforts on establishing a vineyard, importing many varieties of grapes from Europe. Later, when phylloxera wiped out his vines, he turned to pears. It is said that his orchards contained some 60 varieties of pears; and they comprised some of the earliest commercial fruit plantations in central California. His experiments with various types of plants, his leadership in the Grange movement, and his success as a grower caused him to be known as "The Father of Horticulture in California."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Strentzel, as opportunity offered, steadily added to his land holdings in the Alhambra Valley, as his wife soon christened the Cañada del Hambre, and elsewhere in Contra Costa County. Tract by tract the ranch and his other properties expanded until by 1890 the holdings of the physician and his immediate family amounted to about 2,665 acres, plus a number of town lots.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Winkley, John Muir, Naturalist (Nashville, 1959), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Contra Costa County, Assessor's List, Supervisor District 1, Pinole & San Felipe Grants, 1890, pp. 120, 127, 173, MS, in possession of Mr. Louis L. Stein, Jr. This property included tracts belonging to his daughter and to his son-in-law, John Muir.

This sketch of Dr. Strentzel and his ranch is based on the following sources: Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Life of Dr. John T. Strentzel . . ., typescript, in the Bancroft Library, University of California; Virginia Dennison, "Man of Vision," in Oakland Tribune, October 31, 1954; Winkley, John Muir, 101-102; Wolfe, Son of the Wilderness, 174-175.

The Vicente Martinez Adobe. Among the tracts acquired by Dr. Strentzel was one situated in the Alhambra Valley at the mouth of a small tributary valley known as Franklin Canyon. This smaller vale was called the "Canada Ciscal," or "Siscal," by the Mexican Californians.<sup>1</sup>

This property came into Dr. Strentzel's hands during December, 1874, by purchase from Thomas Redfern, described as an "impractical Australian." Redfern had acquired the property in 1861 from B. V. Merle and his wife, who seemingly had bought it in 1856 from Edward Franklin, for whom Franklin Canyon is named. Franklin bought the property on September 13, 1853, from Vicente Martinez, but he and his brother had found life "too lonely" in their isolated location.<sup>2</sup>

Vicente Martinez was the son of Ygnacio Martinez, a soldier under Spain and Mexico to whom the Rancho El Pinole had been conditionally granted in 1823. The final grant was not made until 1842, by which time Don Ygnacio was already occupying the land. The main ranch house was near the present town of Pinole.

Don Vicente was born in Santa Barbara on August 8, 1818, and he accompanied his parents when they moved to El Pinole about 1838. About 1846 he moved to the extreme east end of the rancho and built a home of his own. His first dwelling, described as "frame" by later witnesses but probably a wattle or palizada structure, was situated at the mouth of Franklin Canyon, within about 55 feet of the present Vicente Martinez adobe house.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Deposition of Josè Santos Berreyessa, filed March 6, 1861, in U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, Papers in Case No. 205 N.D., pp. 108-109, MSS, in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, (hereinafter cited as Case 205 N.D.).

<sup>2</sup>Application for Registration of Historical Point of Interest, Vicente Martinez Adobe, July 15, 1953, typewritten, in California Division of Beaches and Parks file; Contra Costa County, Deeds, Book 3, p. 406; Book 8, p. 449; Book 27, pp. 321, 322. Redfern involved in lawsuits, had lost the land to L.B. Mizner and Josiah Sturgis in 1873, but he recovered it during May, 1874.

<sup>3</sup>Oakland Tribune, February 13, 1955; Deposition of Josè S. Berreyessa, Case 205 N.D., pp. 108-109; George Whiting Hendry and J.N. Bowman, The Spanish and Mexican Adobe and Other Buildings in the Nine San Francisco Bay Counties, 1776 to about 1850 (7 vols., typewritten, Berkeley, 1940-1945), V, 450.

Vicente, who had married Guadalupe Moraga, a member of the Joaquin Moraga family of the present Moraga Valley, established a farm at the mouth of the Cañada de Siscal, cultivating the ground, running stock, and building two corrals.<sup>1</sup> His wife died, and on May 20, 1848, he married Maria Neves Soto. The next month, on June 18, 1848, his father died intestate. In the subsequent division of Rancho Pinole among Ygnacio's eleven "Lawful issue," Don Vicente received the section near the present Martinez.<sup>2</sup>

By the fall of 1848 or during 1849--witnesses differ-- Don Vicente constructed the present two-story adobe house near his first wooden home.<sup>3</sup> Although Don Vicente rented his home place to Jose Manuel Callejas, a Chilean, on October 29, 1852, and then, as has been seen, sold the house to Edward Franklin in 1853, he continued to live in the Alhambra Valley for the rest of his life. Here he raised his seven children. Old settlers remember that he lived "very humbly" in Martinez during his last years.<sup>4</sup>

John Muir and the Strentzels, 1874-1880. John Muir's connection with the Alhambra Valley began one day during the summer of 1874 when Dr. and Mrs. Strentzel and their daughter, Louie Wanda, then 27 years old, called at the home of J. B. McChesney in Oakland, where Muir was then living. There is no record of the conversation, but upon leaving, Dr. Strentzel invited Muir to visit the ranch in the Alhambra Valley.

One of Muir's friends, Mrs. E. S. Carr, had for several years been attempting to arrange a meeting between Muir and the talented Miss Strentzel; but he had successfully evaded

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<sup>1</sup>Deposition of Gregorio Briones, Case 205 N.D., p.9.

<sup>2</sup>Oakland Tribune, February 13, 1955; Hendry and Bowman, op. cit., 450; For the division of the Rancho El Pinole among the Martinez heirs, see Contra Costa County, Deeds, Book 3, pp. 409-410.

<sup>3</sup>Deposition of Daniel Hunsaker, filed July 16, 1861, in Case 205 N.D., pp. 448-449; Deposition of José Santos Berreyessa, in ibid., p. 108.

<sup>4</sup>Hendry and Bowman, op.cit., 450; Contra Costa County, Deeds, Book 3, p.9; Deposition of Francisco Galindo, filed March 6, 1861, in Case 205 N.D., p.149.

the issue. And now that the introduction had taken place, he still delayed for three years before accepting the invitation to call at the Strentzel ranch.<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1877 Muir was returning from guiding Sir Joseph Hooker and Asa Gray on a botanical trip to Mount Shasta. Reaching Martinez in a small boat, he walked the three miles to the Strentzel home, finding a welcome as "an honored and long-awaited guest."<sup>2</sup> Writing to his sister several weeks later, Muir mentioned calling "at my friends, the Strentzels, who have eighty acres of choice orchards and vineyards, where I rested two days, my first rest in six weeks."

"They pitied my weary looks," he added, "and made me eat and sleep, stuffing me with turkey, chicken, beef, fruits, and jellies in the most extravagant manner imaginable, and begged me to stay a month."<sup>3</sup>

The winter of 1877-1878 was a busy one for Muir. His writings during this period, especially his story on the water ouzel, firmly established his reputation as an interpreter of nature. But the next spring found him a frequent visitor at the Alhambra Valley ranch, and Mrs. Strentzel's diary indicates that he and Louie did not spend all their time in scientific discussions with the good Dr. Strentzel.<sup>4</sup> Muir devoted the summer of 1878 to a long trip to Nevada, but his friendship with the Strentzels was renewed during the following winter; and in the spring of 1879 he and Louie Strentzel became engaged.

Muir made a trip to Alaska that summer, but on his return arrangements for the marriage were soon made. The ceremony took place on April 14, 1880, at the Strentzel home in Alhambra Valley.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 171, 174-175.

<sup>2</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 196.

<sup>3</sup>William Frederic Badè, The Life and Letters of John Muir (2 Vols., Boston and New York, 1924), II, 86.

<sup>4</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 198.

<sup>5</sup>Badè, Life and Letters, II, 131-135.

The Big House (Muir Home), 1882. After the wedding, John and Louie Muir made their home with the bride's parents. Although the original Strentzel home, which still stands, is known today as the "Muir honeymoon house," the evidence is quite clear that the two couples shared the dwelling for more than two years after the marriage. The Strentzels took John Muir to their hearts and transferred to him the love they had felt for their only son, who had died of diphtheria while still a lad.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the harmony with which the Muirs and Strentzels lived together, the bride's parents felt that Louie and John should have a home of their own. On February 15, 1882, Mrs. Strentzel wrote in her diary the following revealing words: "We have given up this our home place to Louie and John, and made a deed, and now papa and I will go to live on the Franklin place as soon as we can build a house. We hope this will prove a good arrangement."<sup>2</sup>

The site selected for the new Strentzel home was the top of a small knoll about 200 yards east of the Martinez Adobe, about a mile north of their original residence. The first step in constructing the new house was to dig a well at the site. This work was accomplished during May, 1882; and the next month the carpenters arrived to start work.

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Most biographies of Muir state that Dr. and Mrs. Strentzel moved out of their Alhambra Valley home and turned it over to the newlyweds. This is what happened, but most writers do not seem to realize that the transfer did not take place until 1882 and thus give the impression that the Strentzels gave the home to the Muirs at the time of the wedding. Although the Strentzels may have left the newlyweds alone in the house for a short time--there seems to be no evidence on the point readily available--Mrs. Strentzel's diary clearly indicates that from 1880 until at least late in 1882 the Muirs and the Strentzels lived in the same house. Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, Diary, 1868-1882, MS, in the Bancroft Library.

2

Strentzel, Diary, MS, entry for February 15, 1882.

The cellar and cistern were excavated early in July, and on the 10th Dr. Strentzel inspected the foundation and had the workmen "straighten" it. The frame was up by July 26. After visiting the "other place," as the new house was then generally called, on August 13, Mrs. Strentzel noted that the workmen were "getting on very well, have three chimneys up, and the plumbing all done."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the surviving, or available, portions of Mrs. Strentzel's diary do not cover the completion of the house, and thus it is not yet possible to state exactly when the dwelling was completed. Probably the Strentzels moved in late in 1882, although Contra Costa County assessor's records do not list the structure until 1883.<sup>2</sup>

Family tradition maintains that Dr. Strentzel himself designed the imposing, two-story, wood frame home. And he is supposed to have ordered the materials and supervised the construction.<sup>3</sup> Tradition also states that the Strentzels occupied the Martinez Adobe while their new "Big House" was being built; but Mrs. Strentzel's diary gives the impression that Mrs. Muir's parents continued to live in their old home during at least most of the construction period.<sup>4</sup>

John Muir, Rancher. It is said that the day after his wedding, John Muir "went into the orchards and vineyards" on the Strentzel ranch and worked there until July.<sup>5</sup> At any rate, he and Louie soon rented a portion of the Strentzel property, and later they bought a part of the ranch. Muir proved to have a great aptitude for fruit raising, and he became adept at marketing his crops. Although still occasionally taking long summer trips, he devoted most of the next decade to the ranch.

Though his writing and his public service suffered, Muir accumulated a competence during the next few years which, assuring the financial security of his family, eventually left him free to return to his studies, his writings,

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<sup>1</sup>Strentzel, Diary, MS, passim.

<sup>2</sup>John W. Winkley, Historical data for Historic American Buildings Survey (typescript, [c.1961]), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 2, 14; Mr. Henry Sax, interview with J.A. Hussey, February 20, 1963.

<sup>5</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 215.

and his fight for conservation. It is said that in 10 years he was able to set aside \$50,000 in one local bank and that he had accounts in other banks as well. The birth of two daughters during these years served to tie Muir still further to the ranch.<sup>1</sup>

By the late 1880's the hard labor in the orchards was beginning to tell on Muir's health, and he was disturbed by the continued exploitation of the forests. His wife and friends were urging him to return to his writing. At last, in 1887, he agreed to edit two volumes of nature studies and scenic description entitled Picturesque California. Unsuccessful in his efforts to find someone else to manage the ranch, he continued carrying the double load of rancher and writer until 1891.

"After these ten years," he later wrote, "I sold part of the farm and leased the balance, so as to devote the rest of my life, as carefree as possible, to travel and study. Thus, in 1891, I was again free from the farm and all bread-winning cares."<sup>2</sup>

The Muir Home. On October 31, 1890, Dr. Strentzel died. Mrs. Strentzel invited the Muirs to move into the "Big House," which, though larger, was to Muir less comfortable than the old house up the valley. But because Mrs. Strentzel needed the care and companionship of her daughter, the Muirs accepted; and soon thereafter the "Big House" came to be known as the Muir Home. Thus John Muir came to live in the house which was to be his residence for the remaining 24 years of his life.<sup>3</sup>

Although Muir was away on trips for long periods of time, much of his later writing was accomplished in his "study-den" on the second floor. Here, also, he entertained many of the leading conservationists of his time, and here were planned many of the moves in the conservation battles in which he engaged.

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<sup>1</sup>Badè, Life and Letters, II, 193-251; Wolfe, op. cit., 230-237.

<sup>2</sup>Badè, op. cit., 194.

<sup>3</sup>Badè, Life and Letters, 252.

On August 6, 1905, Louie Strentzel Muir died. This event was a severe blow to John Muir. "Thereafter," says one of his biographers, "the old house on the hill was a shelter and a place of work from time to time, but never a home again."<sup>1</sup> After a long trip to Arizona, he returned to the house, where he was required to devote much time to closing his wife's estate, and there "he would allow nothing to be moved--not even a chair--that her hand had placed there."<sup>2</sup>

In June, 1906, Muir's daughter, Wanda, married, and she and her husband moved into the Martinez Adobe, which then stood at the gate to the Muir residential property.<sup>3</sup> His second daughter, Helen, who had been recovering from an illness in Arizona, returned in August and joined her father in the Big House. For a year and a half the two lived there happily, though somewhat lonely--Muir told one friend that the house was "under-peopled"--until Helen's illness returned and she was forced to retreat once more to the desert.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Muir had made some alterations in the house. The original cistern for domestic water in the attic proved inadequate, and Muir built an addition behind the kitchen to support a larger tank. The earthquake of 1906 destroyed the fireplaces on the east side of the house, but those in the dining room and the rooms above were not rebuilt. French doors were also installed in the wall between the

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<sup>1</sup>Badè, Life and Letters, 353.

<sup>2</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 305.

<sup>3</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 307. The adobe house had served as a sort of manager's ranch and headquarters for the Muir ranch. It is still recalled that the workmen reported there in the mornings for the assignment of their daily tasks. The barns and stables of the ranch were located nearby. Mr. Louis Stein, Jr., interview with J. A. Hussey, January 30, 1963.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 309.

lower hall and the family parlor; and a larger cased opening was constructed between the dining room and the ladies' parlor. Also in 1906 a "powder room" in the ladies' parlor was removed. In rebuilding the fireplace in the upstairs southwest bedroom after the earthquake, a piece of petrified wood gathered by Muir was embedded in the bricks over the opening.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1907 and 1912 Muir was away from the ranch for extensive periods, engaged in travel and in conservation efforts. But by the latter year he realized that his time for productive writing was growing short, and he returned to put in long hours in his "scribble-den" in the "Big House." "Just now from every direction grim work is staring me hard in the face crying, 'Twill soon be dark,' and urging concentration and haste," he wrote in one letter.<sup>2</sup>

By 1910 his daughter Helen had married, and Muir occupied the large house by himself. Two or three times a day he "ambled" down to the adobe to play with his grandsons, the sons of Wanda; and he held daily conversations with his friend and neighbor, John Swett.

The passage of the Raker Act, permitting San Francisco to create a reservoir in the Hetch Hetchy Valley, during December 1913, was a severe blow to Muir. His friends believed the end was near. "It was sorrowful indeed to see him sitting in his cobwebbed study in his lonely house . . . with the full force of his defeat upon him, after the struggle of a lifetime in the service of Hetch Hetchy," wrote Robert B. Marshall of the U. S. Geological Survey.<sup>3</sup>

During the summer or fall of 1914 Muir began to rehabilitate the "Big House." Evidently in the hope that he could induce his daughters to live there, he installed

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<sup>1</sup>Historic American Buildings Survey, Photograph-Data Book Report, CAL-1890, (typescript, WODC, San Francisco, 1961), p. 6; Mr. Henry Sax, interview, February 20, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Wolfe, op. cit., 335.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 341.

electricity, painted some of the dark woodwork in lighter colors, and bought new rugs and draperies.<sup>1</sup> Just before leaving to visit his daughter Helen in Southern California in December, 1914, he wrote that the house had been put in "comparative order."

His trip southward was to be his last. At Daggett he contracted pneumonia, and he died in a Los Angeles hospital on Christmas Eve, 1914.

After Muir's death, the old house, by then known as the Muir Home, went to his two daughters. Its subsequent history is described in the sections of this report entitled "Identification" and "Care of Property."

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Wolfe, *op. cit.*, 346-347. The electric lighting consisted of 9 unshaded, single-bulb drop lights, one of which still remains in the house. Mr. Henry Sax, interview, February 20, 1963.

### Bibliographical Note

The two standard biographies of John Muir are William Frederic Badè, The Life and Letters of John Muir (2 vols., Boston and New York, 1924); and Linnie Marsh Wolfe, Son of the Wilderness: the Life of John Muir (New York, 1945). More popular but containing useful material are the shorter studies, John W. Winkley, John Muir, Naturalist: A Concise Biography of the Great Naturalist (Nashville, Tenn., 1959); and James I. Clark, John Muir . . . Wanderer (Madison, Wisconsin, 1957). Also basic is the biographical sketch, "John Muir" by William Frederic Badè in The Dictionary of American Biography, XIII (New York, 1934), 314-317.

In the opinion of the present writer, however, the time is ripe for a new biography of Muir. All existing biographies have been written by ardent admirers of Muir; and a more disinterested study is long overdue. Also, much new material on the conservation movement as a whole has become available in recent years, and reappraisal of Muir's place as a conservationist seems warranted in view of this additional knowledge.

Among the available works which treat Muir's many contributions to conservation are Hans Huth, Nature and the American (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957); Robert Underwood Johnson, Remembered Yesterdays (Boston, 1923); and Samuel P. Hays, Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920 (Cambridge, 1959).

Concerning the Muir Home itself, reliable information is still unassembled. The best single source relating to the builders appears to be Hubert Howe Bancroft, Life of Dr. John T. Strentzel Prepared for Chronicles of the Builders of the Commonwealth (typescript in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley). The only reliable information concerning the progress of construction yet discovered is in Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, Diary, 1868-1882 (MS and typescript, in the Bancroft Library, University of California). Undoubtedly Contra Costa County newspapers contain a good deal of information concerning the Muir House and the property on which it stands, but the time limits of the present study did not permit a search of the files. The Assessor's records and deed books in the Contra Costa County Courthouse, Martinez, were used in the present study, but a more detailed analysis undoubtedly will reveal still more information.

The published and unpublished letters of John Muir contain a good deal of material on Muir's occupation of the site, his attachment for the shrubs and trees on the grounds, and on the furnishings. Unfortunately, the unpublished materials, now largely in the Bancroft Library, are not yet available for public use. The present owners of the site, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, have gathered a good deal of information concerning the house and its furnishings. Most important, perhaps, is a letter dated April 2, 1957, from Muir's daughter, Helen Muir Funk, which describes in detail the furnishings of each room as they were during Muir's occupancy.

Information on the Martinez Adobe and Rancho El Pinole is to be found in the original land grant case records of the U. S. District Court, Northern District of California, for Case 87 N.D. and Case 205 N.D. These papers, which include valuable maps and surveys, are now in the Bancroft Library. These papers form the basis of the account of the adobe which is found in the indispensable George Whiting Hendry and J. N. Bowman, *The Spanish and Mexican Adobe and Other Buildings in the Nine San Francisco Bay Counties* (7 vols., typescript, Berkeley, 1940-1945), in the Bancroft Library. Mr. Louis L. Stein, Jr., owner of the adobe, has a fine collection of photographs and other historical materials relating to both the Martinez House and the Muir Home. Most of the newspaper articles cited in the present study are from the personal collection of the Regional Chief, Division of History and Archeology, Western Region Office.

### C. Architectural Significance

#### General Statement:

"The building is of architectural interest and merit because of its Victorian formality reflecting the social formality that prevailed with the prosperous horticulturists in California during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The architecture and plan are symmetrical about a center entrance and hall, and the scale strives toward the monumental.

"The building has weathered somewhat, but is being placed in an authentic state of preservation by the present owners who are being meticulous in the restoration of missing and damaged parts, and are repainting the building with paint of exact chemical composition of the original paint."<sup>1</sup>

More detailed information on the Muir Home and the Martinez Adobe may be found later in this report in the section titled "Architectural Description," p. 33.

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Historic American Buildings Survey, Report No. H.A.B.S. No. CAL-1890.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

#### A. Accessibility:

The Muir Home and the Martinez Adobe are located on the western edge of the Community of Martinez and within the metropolitan complex of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Muir Home is actually within the city limits of Martinez.

California State Highway 4, scheduled for reconstruction as a full freeway by 1966, is immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the subject property. An interchange will be constructed at Alhambra Avenue, which borders the east side of the property. Interstate 80, eastbound from San Francisco, is approximately eight and one-half miles west of the area, the freeway along the route of State Highway 4 providing access to Interstate 80.

#### B. Population:

Within a few hours drive of the Muir Home there now reside approximately three and one-half million people. By 1975 the projected population will be over five and one-half million.<sup>1/</sup>

Contra Costa County's urban districts are supported to a great extent by local industry, and the present 413,000 population is expected to expand to 762,700 by 1975.<sup>2/</sup>

#### C. Climate:

The generally mild climate presents no problems which will seriously affect construction, maintenance, or visitor services.

Being across the first range of hills east of San Francisco Bay, Martinez' climate is more nearly like that of California's Central Valley with very little summer fog and more extreme temperatures than San Francisco and immediate vicinity. Temperatures range from summer highs of 109° Fahrenheit to winter lows of 56°. Mean temperature is approximately 59° and annual rainfall 16 inches.

#### D. Land Status:

All land within the proposed area is privately owned and in five parcels held by three owners, Henry and Faire Sax, Louis Stein, and Walker Built Homes Inc. (See attached map of proposed area).

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<sup>1/</sup> and <sup>2/</sup> Preliminary Projections of California Areas and Counties to 1975, Calif. Dept. of Finance Publication Jan. 3, 1962

The 9.1 acres comprising the proposed National Historic Site are nestled against the east side of Alhambra Valley at its junction with Franklin Canyon. The surrounding landscape, entirely rural during John Muir's time (Plate Nos. 1 and 2) is now rapidly becoming suburban in character. The soft sparsely wooded hills bordering Alhambra Valley still remain somewhat in their natural state and promise to remain so for the foreseeable future.

The Muir Home on a small round knoll at the east end of the proposed Historic Site and its immediate surroundings seem to identify esthetically with the undisturbed hills surrounding the valley rather than the commercial and residential development on the flat valley floor. Its elevation approximately 30' above the valley floor, physical distance from surrounding suburbia and its protective screen of palms, cedar, eucalyptus and lower shrub growth help to maintain the atmosphere which existed in this pleasant rural valley during Muir's time.

The following is a description of the entire area deemed necessary for proper interpretation, administration, development, and for maintenance of the area's integrity:

All that real property situated in the County of Contra Costa, State of California, described as:

A portion of the Rancho El Pinole, containing 9.10 acres more or less, described as follows:

Commencing in the center line of the Franklin Canyon Road at the North line of that certain 44.87 acre tract of land described in the deed from Daniel L. Parsowith to Pearl Parsowith, dated November 18, 1931 and recorded November 18, 1931 in Volume 290 of Official Records, at page 359; thence from said point of commencement South  $9^{\circ} 24'$  East along the center line of Franklin Canyon Road 281.43 feet (deed); thence South  $1^{\circ} 50'$  West 304.98 feet (deed) to the point of beginning of the herein described parcel of land; thence from said point of beginning, leaving the center line of the Franklin Canyon Road.

1. North  $87^{\circ} 45' 30''$  East 421.70 feet (deed) (North  $88^{\circ} 28' 15''$  East 418.01 feet, according to the California State Division of Highways, District IV, Appraisal Map No. A-655.34 dated November 21, 1962) to a point in the center of Franklin Creek on the West line of the 4.83 acre tract of land described in the deed from Wanda Muir Hanna to Helen Muir dated May 13, 1908 and recorded June 13, 1908 in Volume 137 of Deeds, at page 157; thence along the center of said creek and the westerly line of said Muir property

2. North 23°30' East 120.56 feet (North 23°25'01" East 121.15 feet according to the California State Division of Highways, District IV, Appraisal Map No. A-655.34 dated November 21, 1962); thence
3. North 17°30' East, 2 chains (deed); thence leaving the center line of Franklin Creek and along the northerly line of said Muir property
4. North 70°00' East 4.85 chains (deed) to a post that bears South 24°30' East 3.90 chains from the Northwest corner of Lot "E" of Division No. 1 of the Rancho El Pinole (the Northwest corner of said Lot "E" being the corner to lands now or formerly of A. B. Coleman, J. J. McNamara, and L. S. Muir Estate); thence along the Easterly extension of the Northerly line of said Muir property
5. North 70°00' East to the Westerly right of way line of Alhambra Ave. presumed to be the West line of the 1.80 acre parcel of land described as Parcel One in the deed from E. W. Merrithew to Contra Costa County, dated June 5, 1950 and recorded June 27, 1950 in Volume 1582 of Official Records, at page 224; thence along the West line of said 1.80 acre parcel
6. Southerly to a point, said point being on the right of way line of survey for freeway as shown on California State Division of Highways, District IV, Appraisal Map No. A-655.34, dated November 21, 1962, said point also being in line with station (28 / 81') on the "M" line of said freeway survey; thence following the right of way line of said survey
7. South 71°09'19" West 2.00 feet; thence
8. South 18°50'41" East 59.54 feet; thence
9. On a curve to the right with a radius of 1958.00 feet, through an angle of 2°01'06" for a distance of 68.97 feet; thence
10. South 16°49'35" East - - - - - feet, thence
11. South 3°55'10" West - - - - - feet, thence
12. South 80°08'57" West 741.66 feet; thence
13. North 77°12'06" West 132.68 feet; thence
14. North 65°53'54" West 78.75 feet to the center line of the Franklin Canyon Road; thence
15. Northerly along the center line of Franklin Canyon Road to the point of beginning.

The preceding description has been compiled from the data available. Complete surveys and additional research are necessary before acquisition can be accomplished.

A description of parcels 1, 2, and 3, as shown on the deeds may be found in the appendix of this report.

Options on parcels 1, 2, and 3 are held by ten trustees, officers of the Contra Costa County Historical Society and the John Muir Memorial Association. The purpose of such an option is to hold the area and to encourage its acquisition by a public agency which would preserve and protect the historic values. The option expires May 1, 1964. (See appendix for the text).

#### E. Existing Development and Use:

The present owners of the parcels 1, 2, and 3 containing the John Muir Home and the Vicente Martinez Adobe have taken great interest in perpetuating the historic value of this area. Group tours through the Muir Home are arranged for by appointment and are conducted by the owners. The Martinez Adobe is rented and is not available for tours. The remainder of the area has undergone little change in recent years; no new buildings of any consequence and practically no changes in the landscape having been made.

The subject properties are bounded on three sides by residential areas with commercial development nearby on Alhambra Road. If no measures are taken to preserve this site it will very likely become part of the undifferentiated urban sprawl which surrounds it. The proximity to the proposed freeway also increases the value for commercial uses.

#### F. Architectural Description and Condition of Building

##### John Muir Home

##### Exterior

The overall dimensions of the main element, exclusive of porches, are 40 feet wide by 42 feet deep, with a kitchen wing approximately 19 to 25 feet.

The foundation and basement walls are of red burned brick, as are the intermediate load bearing piers. The floor of basement is approximately 4 feet below finished grade.

The wall construction is wood stud frame and redwood channel siding with two-inch thick rusticated wood quoins at corners. For insulation the exterior walls for the height of the first story are filled with burned brick nogging set on end.

The one-story entrance portico is composed with bay windows on either side forming an elongated hexagonal porch of wood construction. Square moulded and panelled columns resting on balustrade high pedestals support an entablature which extends over the bay windows, and is surmounted by a railing with jig sawn panels between wood corner piers. Half round slender turned columns ornament the corner mullions of the bay windows.

The porch on the west side is partly enclosed and has a flight of stairs to the garden, and a doorway to the library. The porch on the opposite side was a fernery and conservatory and had an entrance stairway from the outside. Entrance from the inside is through a double hung window reaching to the floor for the purpose. Rear stairs and porch are utilitarian.

A three-story addition to the south or rear of the house supports a large water tank for domestic water. The lower two stories of this addition are brick with segmented arch openings which supports the tank which is enclosed in a simplified version of the architecture of the original building. there is also, an unused cistern under the kitchen reached through a floor scuttle.

For insulation, besides the brick filled in between the studs, the floors of the first floor are insulated with 2 inches of adobe composed of clay and straw which was laid in between the floor joists on 1 inch wood boards depressed two inches below the top of the joists. The underside of the floor joists was plastered.

The roof is hipped and was covered with wood shingles, but is now covered with composition shingles. At the peak of the roof is a handsome cupola with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside as the house occupies the top of a knoll.

## Interior

The central stairhall opens to the parlor to the west, to the rear of which is the library. To the east of the hallway is the family parlor, entered through french doors that are not a part of the original work. To the rear of this room is the dining room, to the rear of which is the kitchen. A door in the south end of the stairhall leads to a passage to the kitchen and the rear service stairs. The main stairs to the second floor are against the west wall of the hall. The second floor of the addition supporting the water tank is up a short flight of stairs from the kitchen, and was the servants quarters.

On the second floor are seven bedrooms and one bath, with space for two additional baths. One bedroom was just recently finished.

The ceilings are 12 ft.,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches high at the first floor, 11 ft., 6 inches at the second floor, and 10 ft., 8 inches in the kitchen. Walls are plastered and papered in the living areas. The floors throughout are tongue and groove fir - 1 inch thick on the first floor,  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch on the second floor, and  $\frac{13}{16}$  inch in the attic. The stair treads also are fir. Apparently the stairs and all floors in the living areas were carpeted wall-to-wall.

Lighting originally was by coal oil and candles, but the house was wired for electricity in 1912.

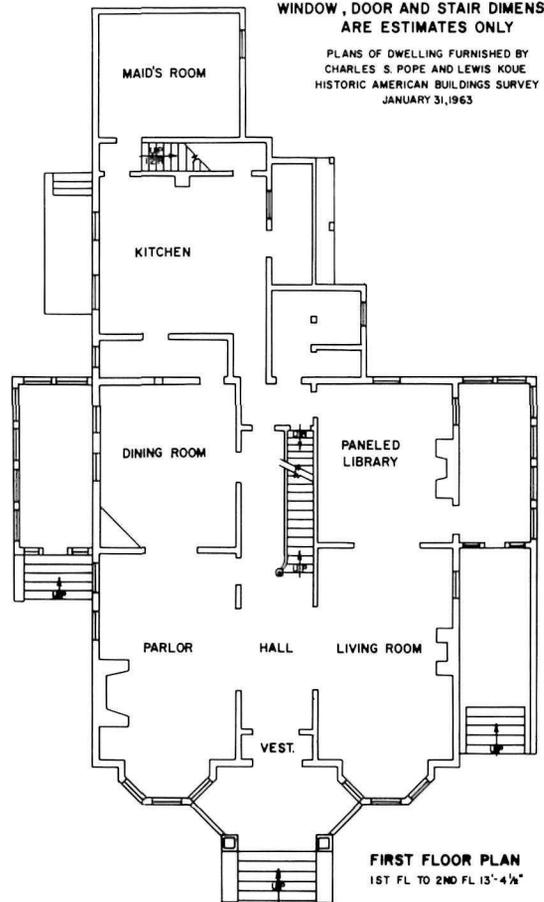
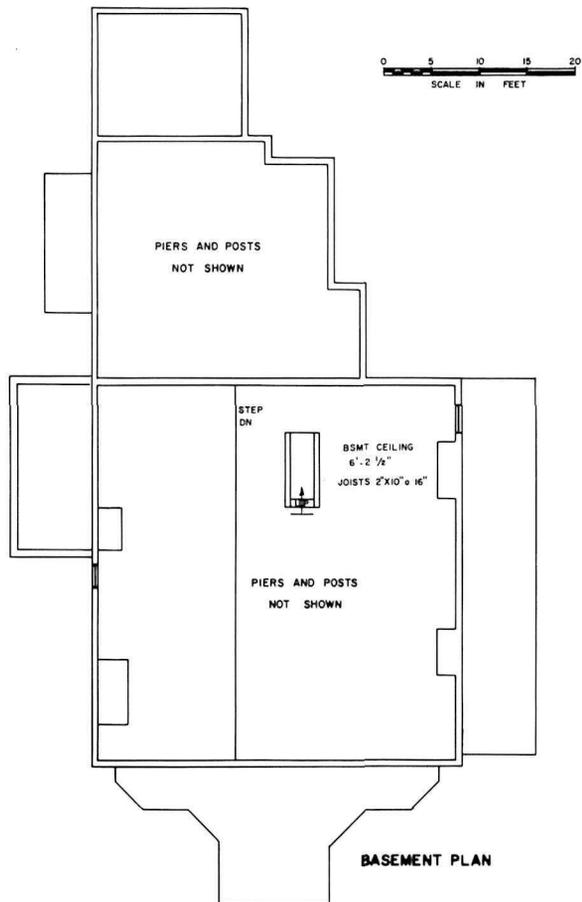
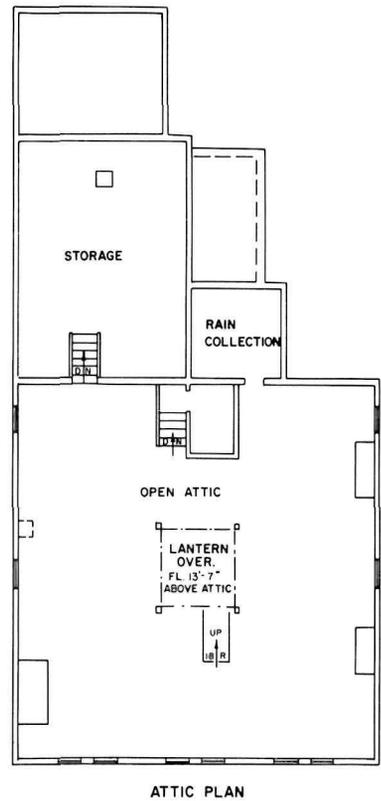
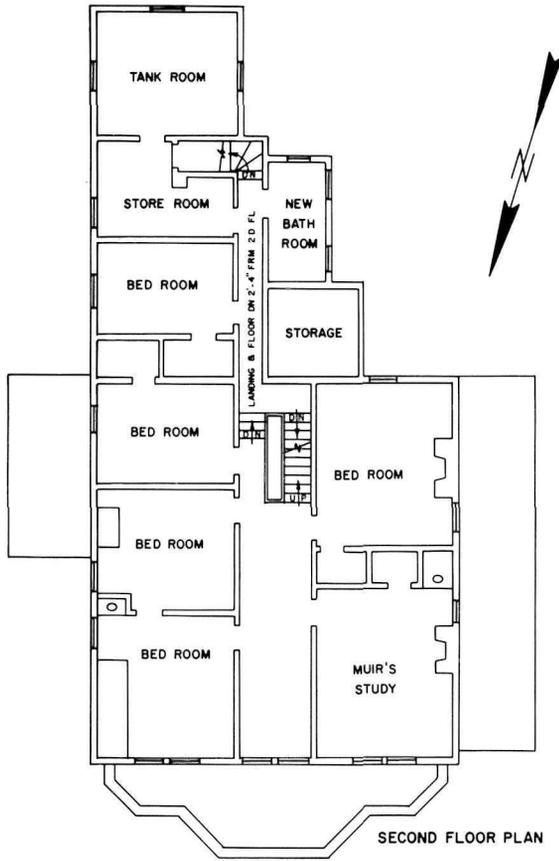
Heating was by fireplaces and stoves, but is now by central gas fired furnace.

The northwest room on the second floor was used by John Muir as his study and it is here that he did much of his writing. It has imported white marble fireplace and mantle, and a built in marble lavatory and cabinet set in a recess in the southwest corner of the room.

The next bedroom to the south has a brick fireplace, apparently built by John Muir as a piece of petrified wood which was of some sentimental significance to John Muir is embedded in the brick over the fireplace opening. 1

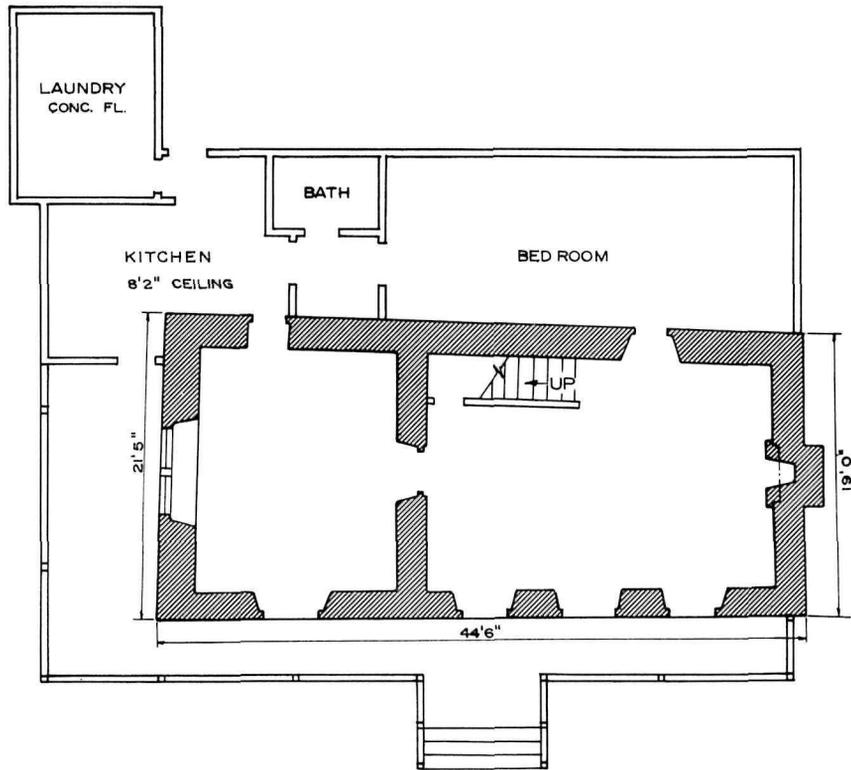
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<sup>1</sup> Historic American Buildings Survey. Report No. HABS NO Cal.-1890

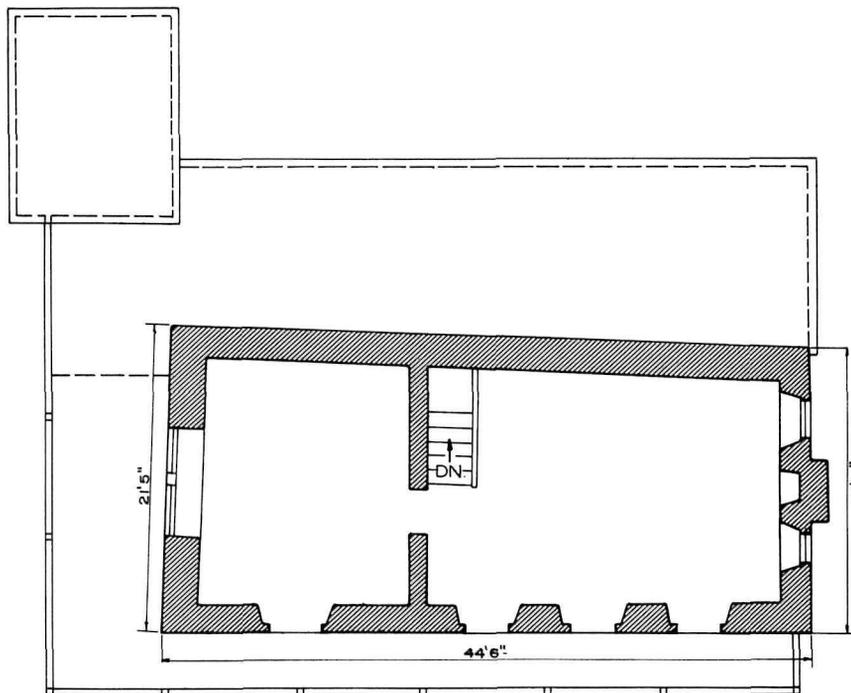


**JOHN MUIR HOME**  
 GENERAL ROOM SIZES ARE CORRECT  
 WINDOW, DOOR AND STAIR DIMENSIONS  
 ARE ESTIMATES ONLY

PLANS OF DWELLING FURNISHED BY  
 CHARLES S POPE AND LEWIS KOUE  
 HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
 JANUARY 31, 1963



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



MARTINEZ ADOBE  
MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA

### Present condition

The structural elements of the fabric are sound and, in general, the exterior and interior finish is in quite good repair. Some finish elements, particularly the fireplace mantle in the parlor is damaged and free-standing colonnettes are missing, as is the original over mantle mirror and frame. The present owner has been meticulous in maintaining integrity in the preservation and replacement of finish materials. All wood framing is elevated approximately three feet above ground on brick foundation walls over a full basement with proximity of wood to earth occurring only at porches.

### Martinez Adobe

This attractive structure consists of a two story adobe with walls over two feet thick plus one story addition added later on the west side providing a bedroom, bath, kitchen and laundry. This adobe portion is 44 feet, 6 inches long and from 19 to 21 feet, 5 inches wide in a truncated shape. A two story porch covers the east and south elevations.

The main adobe structure was built about 1849; but the dates of the additions have not been determined. The house is fully equipped. It is occupied, and appears to be adequately maintained.

### Present Condition

The structure, in general, appears sound and has been maintained in quite good repair as a rental unit. Wear as may be expected for a building of this age is evident. The ground clearance under the one story lean-to at the west side of the building is not very great and some dry rot and termite infestation may be found. Alterations and additions have been incorporated in the building but have not changed the original configuration of the fabric.

### G. Care of Property

Past. The Muir Home today is in a remarkable state of preservation considering its age and the periods of neglect it suffered before being acquired by its present owners. Although John Muir, after the death of Dr. Strentzel, made certain minor changes, particularly in regard to the fireplaces and chimneys, several of which were severely

damaged by the earthquake of 1906; and although other changes in doors, windows, closets, and interior trim were made by later owners, the building on the whole has the same appearance today as in Muir's time. The grounds, although long neglected, still contain many of the trees and shrubs planted by Muir and his family.

After the death of his wife in 1905, John Muir spent a year away from home. He then returned to the "Big House" with his daughter Helen. By 1910, however, Helen had married, and Muir lived in the house alone. Apparently he closed most of the structure and lived mainly in his study on the second floor.

During the summer 1914, his last year of life, Muir began rehabilitating the big house--"a strange impluse in view of his opposition to all changes since his wife's death," noted one of his biographers. 1/

Just before his death in December he wrote to his daughter Helen, "There is no one in the old house but myself. If I could only have you and Wanda as in the auld lang syne, it would be lovely . . . . I have got electric light now in the house and everything has been put in comparative order." 2/

For a number of years after Muir's death, subsequent owners appear to have kept the property in reasonably good repair and to have used it as a residence. New chandeliers were installed during the 1930's.

By the end of 1954, however, the house had stood empty for 2 years, during which period the structure was severely damaged by vandals and by 2 tramps who inhabited the place. The marble fireplaces, in particular, were wantonly smashed during this time, and 28 windows were broken. But the essential structure and even much of the interior finish were not seriously injured.

Present. After purchasing the home in 1955, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax began to restore it to its appearance as of about 1900. The rehabilitation work, which is still

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, Son of the Wilderness, 346.

<sup>2</sup> Wolfe, Son of the Wilderness, 347.

underway, has been undertaken by Mr. Sax personally. The windows have been replaced, furnace heat has been installed, the house has been rewired, the roof and gutters have been repaired, and the interior has been restored. At the present time the exterior is being repainted with paint "of exact chemical composition of the original paint." 1 /

The Saxes have also begun to collect furniture and objects which belonged to Muir or which are similar to those which were in the house in Muir's time. This refurnishing is being done in conformity with detailed furnishings information supplied by Helen Muir Funk, Muir's daughter.

It may be said, therefore, that the house is now receiving conscientious and adequate care. However, the Saxes are financing the work with their own funds, augmented by assistance from the John Muir Memorial Association and from the modest admission donations. These sources are not adequate to permit complete restoration except over a period of time. It has not been possible, for instance, to give the grounds more than rough maintenance attention.

The Saxes occupy the Muir Home as their permanent residence, and it thus has the status of a private home. However, beginning in 1957, the house has been open by appointment for tours by youth organizations, school, and other groups. The Saxes have agreed to sell their property at cost to a public agency, and to this end they in 1959 gave a formal option to the joint trustees of the John Muir Memorial Association and the Contra Costa County Historical Association.

#### H. Special Problems

A proposed freeway is to be constructed on the south boundary of the property by 1966. Although this presents aesthetic problems which impinge on the area's integrity, with the cooperation of the State Highway Department, damage can be held to a minimum. The major problems lie not in encroachment on the Muir Home itself, but in the extent of the fill slope necessary for the freeway's approach to

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<sup>1</sup>HABS, Photo-Data Book, Part II, p. 1.

Franklin Canyon and the proximity of that slope to the Martinez Adobe. Plate No. 7. There is also considerable cut necessary on the ridges to the west and south of the area. This alteration of the topography and loss of the vegetation will change the character of the adjacent setting. However, the Muir Home, the Martinez Adobe and their immediate surroundings will remain intact. The State of California proposes to save all the existing trees south of the Muir Home, and will install rock wells around the trees, which will be within the lower part of the fill slope. Appropriate planting on the cut slopes and special care during construction can hold damage to a minimum.

The existence of a fill to support the freeway, although closer, will certainly be no more of an intrusion than is the present railroad trestle. Plate No. 6. In fact, with the planting which is contemplated, this view from the Muir Home might be improved somewhat.

In conjunction with the freeway construction there will be a right-of-way established for the California State Beaches and Parks to accommodate a relocated section of The California Hiking and Riding Trail. This trail now descends from the hills west of Alhambra Valley and will pass across the southwest corner of the proposed historic site and under the freeway by means of a tunnel due south of the Martinez Adobe. Such use is entirely compatible with the subject proposal and in fact enhances the area value and adds another dimension to potential public use.

#### IV. SUITABILITY

##### A. Integrity

The John Muir Home at present possesses a high degree of integrity. This condition prevails despite the close approach of subdivisions and highways and despite previous neglect of the structure and its grounds. Because of the conditions of terrain and vegetation, the scene from the house and the view of the house from the west remain much as they must have been in Muir's time. Although the rural quiet of the Alhambra Valley has vanished, there still remains the illusion of rural peace and beauty.

The house itself remains basically as it was in Muir's day, retaining most of the original materials and workmanship. Although only 3 pieces of furniture now in the house belonged to Muir, there remains the probability that many more can be acquired. Many of the trees and shrubs planted by Muir, and to which he had such a sentimental attachment, still exist. The house stands on its original location in significant remnants of its original setting.

It must be noted, however, that the proposed elevated freeway along the south side of the proposed National Historic Site does pose a minor threat to the area's integrity. This matter is discussed in more detail in this report on pages 38 and 39.

##### B. Adaptability

Limited size and the necessity to protect the integrity of this Historic Site requires separation of administrative and interpretive uses. The prime exhibit, the Muir Home itself, will be the major visitor attraction. Its location suggest retention of the existing physical separation from the remainder of the area.

Entrance, parking, and interpretive facilities which prepare the visitor for the prime exhibit are suitable uses for the level to gently rolling land north and west of the Muir Home. Administrative use might be appropriate for the Martinez Adobe, near the west end of the area. It is of secondary historical significance. Proximity to the proposed freeway, and position relative to the Muir Home are deterrent to public use of the Martinez Adobe,

particularly when related to the prime exhibit and its interpretation.

The entire area as proposed is small. Employee housing, except perhaps for one residence, need not be in the area, since the nearby community provides this necessity. Administration and interpretation can be uncomplicated due to the ease in separation of these two functions. With careful planning, the existing planting of cedar, eucalyptus, and palm and the building's elevation above the surrounding area will retain the aloofness which the Muir Home now enjoys from surrounding thoroughfares and uncompromising suburban development.

### C. Relationship to Areas Already in the Park System

The John Muir Home is significant in relation to two broad themes in American history--literature and conservation. There are no sites presently in the National Park System which illustrate the literary history of the United States.

Probably the Muir Home will be judged to be primarily important because of its association with the movement to conserve natural resources. Five areas of the National Park System--Devils Tower, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Olympic, and the Theodore Roosevelt Home at Sagamore Hill have unusually significant associations with this theme, but they were set aside and established for scenic or scientific values or for historical values associated with other themes than that of conservation. (See National Survey Theme XIX, Conservation of Natural Resources, Pages 221-222). The National Park Service at present does not administer "any area set aside particularly to illustrate or commemorate this part of our intellectual and cultural history."

Muir Woods National Monument was named at the request of its donor for John Muir, but it was established to preserve a fine grove of redwoods and not specifically to honor John Muir. Several features in existing areas of the National Park System, such as the Muir Glacier in Glacier Bay National Monument, the Muir Grove in Sequoia National Park, and the Muir Trail in Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and Yosemite, bear John Muir's name.

## V. FEASIBILITY

### A. Availability

Options held by trustees of the Contra Costa Historical Society and the John Muir Memorial Association make the major part of the area available without complication and for minimum cost. Opportunity for such easy acquisition is not usual in the case of proposed additions to the National Park System, particularly when the land involved is in an urban area. In addition, the owners of parcels 1, 2 and 3, are particularly interested in the preservation and protection of the inherent historic values under the administration of a public agency. This is also true of the organizations holding options on the property.

The remaining parcels necessary to complete the area as a comprehensive unit are held by a private developer. The cost of such acquisition will be more than that of the parcels containing the historic features on a per acre basis. However, to protect the integrity of the area and prevent incompatible commercial or residential development, purchase of the frontage on Alhambra Road is highly desirable.

### B. Relationship to the local economy

Martinez and adjacent communities are now and will continue to be residential in character, serving nearby industrial areas and to some extent San Francisco and East Bay cities. That establishment of the John Muir Home as a unit in the National Park System will have an effect on the local economy is of minor importance in consideration of this proposal. However, it is likely that such an area would be welcomed with enthusiasm by Martinez and that the attendant economic benefits brought about by the influx of visitors would be recognized.

### C. Possibility of Preservation

The possibilities and opportunities for preservation are excellent. The property is available, the structure is basically sound, and restoration and maintenance presents no special problems.

The structural changes which have been made in the house since Muir's time are relatively minor; and the restoration of the house to its pre-1914 appearance would not be a major undertaking. The interior work required would

consist largely of restoring one partition in a parlor on the main floor, possible restoration of a fireplace, restoration of plaster ceiling decorations, repair of plaster and moldings, painting, restoring kitchen sink, replacement of some hardware, and other relatively minor adjustments. Exterior work would include the replacement of certain woodwork elements, including the railing over the front entrance. The south porch window frames need to be changed to double-hung frames. A certain amount of foundation and exterior sheathing repair needs to be done, but no major reconstruction seems necessary.

The Martinez Adobe integrity can only be surmised. Windows have been changed and ceilings plastered in. The addition at the back could be kept for use, but should be examined for dry rot and termites. The building requires considerable additional investigation to determine to what extent the structure could be returned to its original state and what the cost of such restoration would be.

A P P E N D I X

A. Study Procedures and Persons Consulted

B. Options: Parcel 1

Parcels 2 and 3

C. Property Description: Parcel 1

Parcel 2

Parcel 3

## Appendix A

### Study Procedures and Persons Consulted

Four field trips to the area by Western Regional Office personnel in the Spring of 1963 were required for investigation of the site, taking photographs, consultation with the present owners of the subject area, and research into Contra Costa County and title company records for information on the properties involved.

In addition to the participation of Western Regional Office personnel, the following persons and organizations were consulted for information necessary for completion of the report:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry V. Sax	Martinez, Calif.
Mr. Louis L. Stein, Jr.,	Berkeley, Calif.
Mr. A. E. Simmonds California State Division of Highways	San Francisco Office
Mr. Jack Dyson California State Division of Beaches and Parks	Sacramento Office
Mr. Allan Ottley California Section of the California State Library	Sacramento, Calif.
Dr. John W. Winkley, President of the John Muir Memorial Association	Martinez, Calif.
Attorney Frank Bray, Jr.	Martinez, Calif.
Martinez Realty	Martinez, Calif.
Contra Costa County Offices	Martinez, Calif.
Western Title Company	Martinez, Calif.
Bancroft Library, University of California	Berkeley, Calif.

OPTION TO PURCHASE REAL PROPERTY

THIS AGREEMENT made this 23rd day of April, 1961, by and between HENRY V. SAX and FAIRE E. SAX, his wife, hereinafter called "parties of the first part", and JAMES B. JORY, DONALD LITTLE, O. J. WOHLGEMUTH, EDWARD M. ROWLAND, AND A. F. BRAY, SR., Trustees for the Contra Costa County Historical Society, an unincorporated association, and JOHN W. WINKLEY, JACQUELINE WATKINS, WAKEFIELD TAYLOR, HARRIETT KELLY, LEILA VEALE BRAY, AND WESTWOOD WALLACE, Trustees for the John Muir Memorial Association, a non-profit corporation, hereinafter referred to as "parties of the second part":

W I T N E S S E T H:

That the parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of \$ One to them in hand by the parties of the second part paid, the receipt of which is acknowledged, do hereby agree to sell to parties of the second part all that certain real property together with all improvements thereon, situate in the City of Martinez, County of Contra Costa, State of California, commonly known as the Muir Manor, 4440 Alhambra Avenue, Martinez, California, at the option of the parties of the second part at any time prior to May 1, 1964, for the sum of \$41,000 plus insurance and taxes, payable as follows: Twenty-nine (29%) per cent thirty (30) days after the exercise of this option as hereinafter provided, and the balance in yearly installments of Twenty-five Hundred (\$2,500.00) Dollars or more with interest at five (5%) per cent payable annually, until fully paid. Additional payments may be made at any time. All deferred payments shall bear interest at the rate of five (5%) per cent per annum as above, and if not so paid shall be added to the principal at a like rate of interest. If any installment of principal or interest is not paid when due, then the whole of the principal or interest shall, at the option of the parties of the first part, without notice, become forthwith due and payable.

Parties of the first part agree further not to withdraw the offer for the same period.

AND IT IS FURTHER AGREED:

1. Possession of said property is to be delivered to parties of the second part on the date of pro-ration hereinafter referred to.

2. Parties of the second part shall exercise the option herein granted by notice in writing personally delivered or delivered by registered mail to parties of the first part at any time thirty (30) days prior to the expiration of this option. That parties of the second part within thirty (30) days after notice of exercise as hereinabove provided will deposit and deliver all necessary funds, papers and other documents in escrow with Western Title Guaranty Company, Contra Costa County Division for the purpose of completing the purchase of said property.

3. Property taxes on said property, premiums on insurance, rents and any other charges against said property shall be prorated as of the date of close of escrow.

Appendix B

Parcel 1 - Continued

4. Parties of the second part agree that said premises shall be held by them, their heirs, successors and assigns, for the sole purpose of historical and park uses, and no other.

5. Upon the full performance by the parties of the second part, of all the terms and conditions hereof, parties of the first part agree to make, execute and deliver to parties of the second part a good and sufficient deed conveying the above described premises to the parties of the second part, or their nominee, free and clear of all encumbrances made or suffered by parties of the first part.

6. That this agreement is not assignable in whole or in part, either by operation of law, or otherwise, without the prior written consent of the parties of the first part.

7. That the performance by the parties of the second part of all the terms hereof is a condition precedent, whereon depends the performance of the agreement on the part of the parties of the first part.

8. That the waiver by the parties of the first part of any breach of any term hereof shall not be a waiver of any subsequent or other breach hereof nor of any term or condition hereof.

9. That in the event of the failure of the parties of the second part to comply with the whole or any of the terms hereof, the parties of the first part shall be released from all obligations in law or in equity to convey said premises, and the parties of the second part shall forfeit all rights hereunder and the parties of the first part shall retain all moneys paid hereunder.

10. That time is of the essence of this agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have executed this instrument the day and year first hereinabove written.

PARTIES OF THE FIRST PART:

Sgd. Henry V. Sax

Sgd. Faire E. Sax

PARTIES OF THE SECOND PART:

JOHN MUIR MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

by Sgd. John W. Winkley

Trustee

Sgd. Leila Veale Bray

Trustee

Sgd. Wakefield Taylor

Trustee

Sgd. Jacqueline A. Watkins

Trustee

Sgd. Westwood Wallace

Trustee

Sgd. Harriet Kelly

Trustee

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by Sgd. James B. Jory

Trustee

Sgd. Donald Little

Trustee

Sgd. Edward M. Rowland

Trustee

Sgd. A. F. Bray

Trustee

Sgd. O. J. Wohlgemuth

Trustee

OPTION TO PURCHASE REAL PROPERTY

THIS AGREEMENT made this 23rd day of April, 1961, by and between LOUIS L. STEIN AND MILDRED R. STEIN, his wife, hereinafter called "parties of the first part", and JAMES B. JORY, DONALD LITTLE, O. J. WOHLGEMUTH, EDWARD M. ROWLAND, AND A. F. BRAY, SR., Trustees for the Contra Costa County Historical Society, an unincorporation association, and JOHN W. WINKLEY, JACQUELINE WATKINS, WAKEFIELD TAYLOR, HARRIETT KELLY, LEILA VEALE BRAY, and WESTWOOD WALLACE, Trustees for the John Muir Memorial Association, a non-profit corporation, hereinafter referred to as "parties of the second part":

W I T N E S S E T H:

That the parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of \$ One to them in hand by the parties of the second part paid, the receipt of which is acknowledged, do hereby agree to sell to parties of the second part all that certain real property together with all improvements thereon, situate in the City of Martinez, County of Contra Costa, State of California, commonly known as the Martinez Adobe, Martinez, California, at the option of the parties of the second part at any time before May 1st 1964 for the sum of \$ 40,000 plus insurance and taxes, payable as follows: Twenty-nine (29%) per cent thirty (30) days after the exercise of this option as hereinafter provided, and the balance in yearly installments of Three Thousand (\$3,000.00) Dollars or more with interest at five (5%) per cent payable annually, until fully paid. Additional payments may be made at any time. All deferred payments shall bear interest at the rate of five (5%) per cent per annum as above, and if not so paid shall be added to the principal at a like rate of interest. If any installment of principal or interest is not paid when due, then the whole of the principal or interest shall, at the option of the parties of the first part, without notice, become forthwith due and payable.

Parties of the first part agree further not to withdraw the offer for the same period.

AND IT IS FURTHER AGREED:

1. Possession of said property is to be delivered to parties of the second part on the date of pro-ration hereinafter referred to.

2. Parties of the second part shall exercise the option herein granted by notice in writing personally delivered or delivered by registered mail to parties of the first part at any time thirty (30) days prior to the expiration of this option. That parties of the second part within thirty (30) days after notice of exercise as hereinabove provided will deposit and deliver all necessary funds, papers and other documents in escrow

Appendix B

Parcels 2 and 3 - Continued

with Western Title Guaranty Company, Contra Costa County Division for the purpose of completing the purchase of said property.

3. Property taxes on said property, premiums on insurance, rents and any other charges against said property shall be prorated as of the date of close of escrow.

4. Parties of the second part agree that said premises shall be held by them, their heirs, successors and assigns, for the sole purpose of historical and park uses, and no other.

5. Upon the full performance by the parties of the second part, of all the terms and conditions hereof, parties of the first part agree to make, execute and deliver to parties of the second part a good and sufficient deed conveying the above described premises to the parties of the second part, or their nominee, free and clear of all encumbrances made or suffered by parties of the first part.

6. That this agreement is not assignable in whole or in part, either by operation of law, or otherwise, without the prior written consent of the parties of the first part.

7. That the performance by the parties of the second part of all the terms hereof is a condition precedent, whereon depends the performance of the agreement on the part of the parties of the first part.

8. That the waiver by the parties of the first part of any breach of any term hereof shall not be a waiver of any subsequent or other breach hereof nor of any term or condition hereof.

9. That in the event of the failure of the parties of the second part to comply with the whole or any of the terms hereof, the parties of the first part shall be released from all obligations in law or in equity to convey said premises, and the parties of the second part shall forfeit all rights hereunder and the parties of the first part shall retain all moneys paid hereunder.

10. That time is of the essence of this agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have executed this instrument the day and year first hereinabove written.

PARTIES OF THE FIRST PART:

Sgd. Louis L. Stein

Sgd. Mildred R. Stein

PARTIES OF THE SECOND PART:

JOHN MUIR MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION  
by Sgd. John W. Winkley Trustee  
Sgd. Harriet Kelly Trustee  
Sgd. Jacqueline A. Watkins Trustee  
Sgd. Wakefield Taylor Trustee  
Sgd. Leila Veale Bray Trustee  
Sgd. Westwood Wallace Trustee

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
by Sgd. James B. Jory Trustee  
Sgd. Donald Little Trustee  
Sgd. O. J. Wohlgenuth Trustee  
Sgd. Edward M. Rowland Trustee  
Sgd. A. F. Bray Trustee

Appendix C  
Property Description Parcel 1

From: Andrew J. Kreiss and Barbara E. Schulz

To: Henry V. Sax and Faire E. Sax, his wife,

\* as joint tenants

all that real property situated in the County of  
Contra Costa, State of California, described as follows:

These parcels of land in the County of Contra Costa,  
State of California, described as follows:

PARCEL ONE

Portion of Lots "E" and "G" of Division No. 1 of the  
Rancho El Pinole, containing 4.83 acres, more or less, de-  
scribed as follows:

Beginning at a post bearing south  $24\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  east, 3.90  
chains from the northwest corner of Lot "E" of Division No. 1  
of the Rancho El Pinole (the northwest corner of said Lot "E"  
being the corner to lands now or formerly of A. B. Coleman, J.  
J. McNamara, and L. S. Muir Estate); thence from said point of  
beginning, south  $70^{\circ}$  west along fence line, 4.85 chains to the  
center of a creek; thence along the center of said creek,  
south  $17\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  west, 2 chains; thence south  $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  west, 1.97  
chains to the north side of a bridge; thence north  $87\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$   
east leaving said creek, and running along fence, 2.21 chains  
to station 5 in angle of fence on northerly side of an avenue;  
thence south  $31\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  east, 72 links to station 6 at angle in  
fence; thence south  $4\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  east, 3.79 chains to station in  
angle of fence; thence north  $70^{\circ} 50'$  east, 1.79 chains to station  
in angle of fence; thence south  $84\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$  east, 52 links to station  
in angle of fence; thence north  $71\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  east, 3.88 chains to  
station in angle of fence; thence north  $19\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}$  west, 8.44 chains  
to the point of beginning.

EXCEPTING THEREFROM: That parcel of land described in the  
deed from Andrew J. Kreiss, et al, to Walker-Built Homes, Inc.,  
dated December 21, 1953 and recorded March 12, 1954 (File No.  
12596).

## PARCEL TWO

The "right of way for egress and ingress to and from the County Road", as granted in the deed from Helen Muir Funk, et vir, to A. L. Irish, dated January 22, 1919 and recorded February 1, 1919 in Volume 332 of Deeds, at page 214, and in the deed from Wanda Muir Hanna, et vir, to Constance C. Schoolcraft, dated March 28, 1919 and recorded April 23, 1919 in Volume 333 of Deeds, at page 345, along a line described as follows:

Beginning at a point in the center of an avenue between stations 5 and 6 of the above described tract; thence running westerly along the center line of said avenue to the County Road".

The width of said right of way is not set forth of record.

## PARCEL THREE

The right of way granted in the deed from Walker Built Homes, Inc., to Andrew J. Kreiss, et al, dated December 21, 1953 and recorded March 12, 1954, in Volume 2283 of Official Records, at page 345, as follows:

"A right of way (not to be exclusive) as an appurtenance to the 4.83 acre parcel of land described in the Decree of Distribution dated September 16, 1946, a certified copy of which was recorded September 16, 1946 in Volume 934 of Official Records, at page 398, (excepting however, the east 25 feet of said 4.83 acre parcel) for use as a roadway for vehicles of all kinds, pedestrians and animals, for water, gas, oil and sewer pipe lines, and for telephone, television service, electric light and power lines, together with the necessary poles or conduits to carry said lines over a strip of land 50 feet wide described as follows:

Portion of the Rancho El Pinole, described as follows:

Beginning on the east line of the 4.83 acre parcel of land described in the Decree of Distribution of the estate of Nellie Kreiss, deceased, dated September 16, 1946, a certified copy of which decree was recorded September 16, 1946 in Volume 934 of Official Records, at page 398, distant thereon south  $19^{\circ} 45'$  east, 125 feet from the most northerly corner of said 4.83 acre parcel; thence from said point of beginning, south  $19^{\circ} 45'$  east along said east line 50 feet; thence north  $70^{\circ} 15'$  east to the west line of the 1.80 acre parcel of land described as Parcel One in the deed from E. W. Merrithew to Contra Costa County, dated June 5, 1950 and recorded June 27, 1950 in Volume 1582 of Official Records, at page 224; thence northerly along said west line to a line drawn north  $70^{\circ} 15'$  east from the point of beginning; thence south  $70^{\circ} 15'$  west to the point of beginning."

APPENDIX C  
Property Description Parcel 2

From: Daniel L. Parsowith, a widower,

To: Louis L. Stein, and Mildred R. Stein, his wife

\* as joint tenants

all that real property situate in the \* \* \* \* \* County of  
Contra Costa \* \* \* \* \* State of California, described as  
follows:

Portion of the Rancho L. Pinole, containing 3.857 acres,  
more or less, described as follows:

Commencing in the center line of the Franklin Canyon Road  
at the north line of that certain 44.87 acre tract of land  
described in the deed from Daniel L. Parsowith to Pearl Parsowith,  
dated November 18, 1931 and recorded November 18, 1931 in Volume  
290 of Official Records, at page 359; thence from said point of  
commencement south 9° 24' east along the center line of Franklin  
Canyon Road, 281.43 feet; thence south 1° 50' west 304.98 feet  
to the point of beginning of the herein described parcel of land;  
thence from said point of beginning, leaving the center line of  
the Franklin Canyon Road, north 87° 45' 30" east, 421.70 feet to  
a point in the center of Franklin Creek on the west line of the  
4.83 acre tract of land described in the deed from Wanda Muir  
Hanna to Helen Muir, dated May 13, 1908 and recorded June 13, 1908  
in Volume 137 of Deeds, at page 157; thence running up the center  
of Franklin Creek and along the westerly line of the 4.83 acre  
tract above referred to, south 23° 48' west 9.46 feet; thence  
leaving said westerly line and continuing along the center line  
of Franklin Creek as follows: South 8° 16' 30" east, 71.09 feet;  
south 33° 28' 30" east 71.68 feet; south 7° 27' 30" west, 31.88  
feet; south 41° 38' 30" west 29.45 feet; south 18° 01' west,  
37.54 feet; south 13° 06' west, 67.31 feet; south 16° 51' 30" east,  
51.41 feet and south 16° 37' 30" west, 58.15 feet; thence, leaving  
the center line of Franklin Creek, south 86° 59' 30" west, 292.03  
feet; thence north 56° 30' 30" west, 67.57 feet; thence north 86°  
09' west, 55.08 feet to the center line of Franklin Canyon Road;  
thence running along said center line, north 2° 25' west, 316.76  
feet and north 1° 50' east, 39.98 feet to the point of beginning.

APPENDIX C

Property Description, Parcel 3

From: WALKER-BUILT HOMES, INC., a corporation

To: LOUIS L. STEIN, JR

all that real property situate in the City of Martinez, County of Contra Costa, State of California, described as follows:

Portion of the Rancho El Pinole, described as follows:

Beginning in the center line of Franklin Creek, being a west line of the 26.144 acre parcel of land described as Parcel One in the deed from E. W. Merrithew to Walker-Built Homes, Inc., recorded December 29, 1950 in Volume 1694 of Official Records, at page 343, at the north line of the parcel of land described in the deed from Walker-Built Homes, Inc. to State of California, recorded October 21, 1958 in Volume 3248 of Official Records, at page 154; thence from said point of beginning along said center line as follows: North  $15^{\circ} 50' 45''$  west, 19.08 feet; north  $14^{\circ} 06' 45''$  east, 67.34 feet; north  $19^{\circ} 01' 45''$  east, 37.54 feet; north  $42^{\circ} 38' 45''$  east, 29.45 feet; north  $8^{\circ} 27' 45''$  east, 31.88 feet; north  $32^{\circ} 28' 15''$  west, 71.68 feet and north  $7^{\circ} 16' 15''$  west, 71.09 feet to a south line of the parcel of land described as Parcel One in the deed from Andrew J. Kreiss, et al, to Henry V. Sax, et ux, recorded January 24, 1955 in Volume 2463 of Official Records, at page 5; thence along the exterior line of said Sax parcel (2463 OR 5) as follows: North  $87^{\circ} 26' 50''$  east, 145.82 feet; south  $21^{\circ} 33' 10''$  east, 47.52 feet and south  $5^{\circ} 04' 30''$  east, 222.13 feet to the north line of said State of California parcel (3248 OR 154); thence south  $75^{\circ} 18' 42''$  west, along said north line 174.95 feet to the point of beginning.

PHOTOGRAPHS

PLATE NO. 1 - John Muir Home in 1900, looking North.

-Photo Courtesy Louis Stein, Jr.

PLATE NO. 2 - Martinez Adobe in 1885, looking West from Muir Home. Dr. John Strentzel in foreground.

-Photo Courtesy Louis Stein, Jr.

PLATE NO. 3 - Muir Home, east facade California fan palms flanking entrance planted during Muir's time.

-NPS Photo 1961

PLATE NO. 4 - Alhambra Valley from the East, Muir Home in the center. Proposed freeway follows route of State Highway 4 paralleling the railroad to the left of the Muir Home.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 5 - Muir Home from Northeast. Large trees planted during Muir's time. Present entrance road in lower right corner.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 6 - View South from Muir Home toward Santa Fe Railroad trestle. Freeway will be on a twenty-foot fill on alignment with State Highway 4 in foreground. All trees to remain.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 7 - Martinez Adobe, from the East near Alhambra Creek. Freeway will cut through the ridge at open area left center.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 8 - Muir Home from the west boundary of the Martinez Adobe tract, across Franklin Creek.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 9 - Alhambra Valley from the West on approximate location of hiking and riding trail. Muir Home in center, roof of the Martinez Adobe lower left among the trees. Toe of freeway fill to follow a line approximately from panel truck in foreground to large truck far right center.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 10- Muir Home, east side, scaffold structure near roof for repair of eaves by present owner.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 11 -John Muir Home, stair hall from entrance.

-H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

PLATE NO. 12 - John Muir Home, west parlor. Vandal damage to onyx fireplace left unrepaired for interpretive purposes.

-H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

PLATE NO. 13 John Muir Home, 1st floor library.

-H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

PLATE NO. 14 - John Muir Home, 2nd floor "Study-den."

-H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

PLATE NO. 15 - John Muir Home, ceiling medalion in  
west parlor.

-H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

PLATE NO. 16 - Cupola, John Muir Home.

-H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

PLATE NO. 17 - Martinez Adobe, east facade.

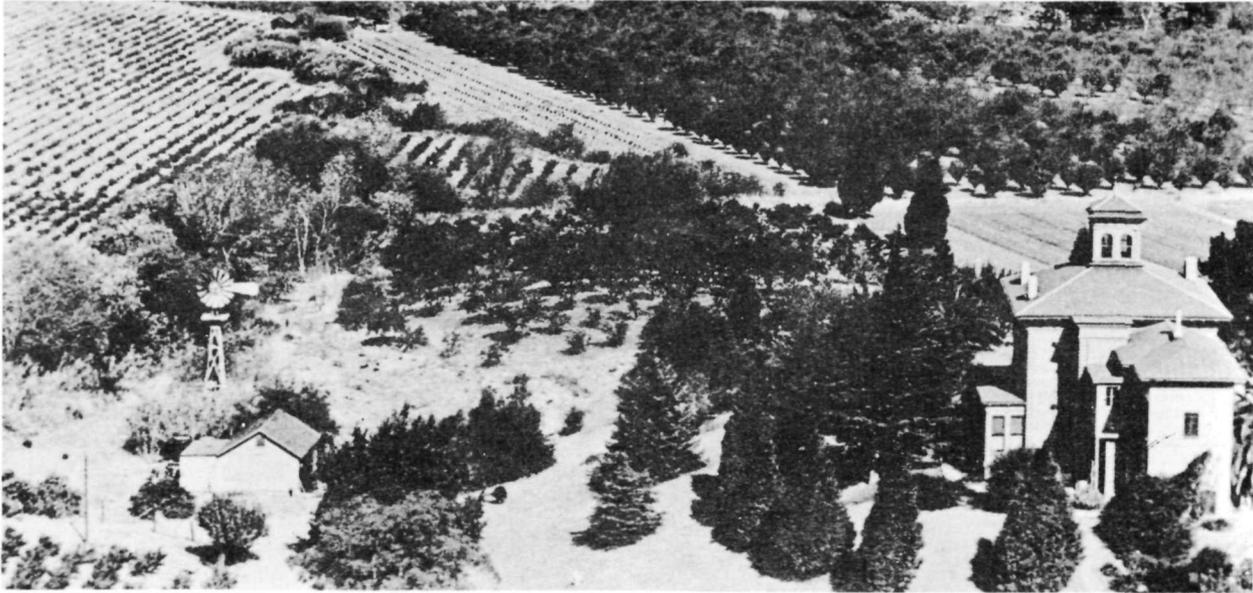
-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 18 Martinez Adobe east facade.

-NPS Photo 1963

PLATE NO. 19 Martinez Adobe interior 1st floor  
showing Adobe walls over two feet  
thick.

-NPS Photo 1963



John Muir Home in 1900, looking North

Photo Courtesy Louis Stein, Jr.



Martinez Adobe in 1885, looking West from Muir Home. Dr. John Strentzel in foreground.

Photo Courtesy Louis Stein, Jr.

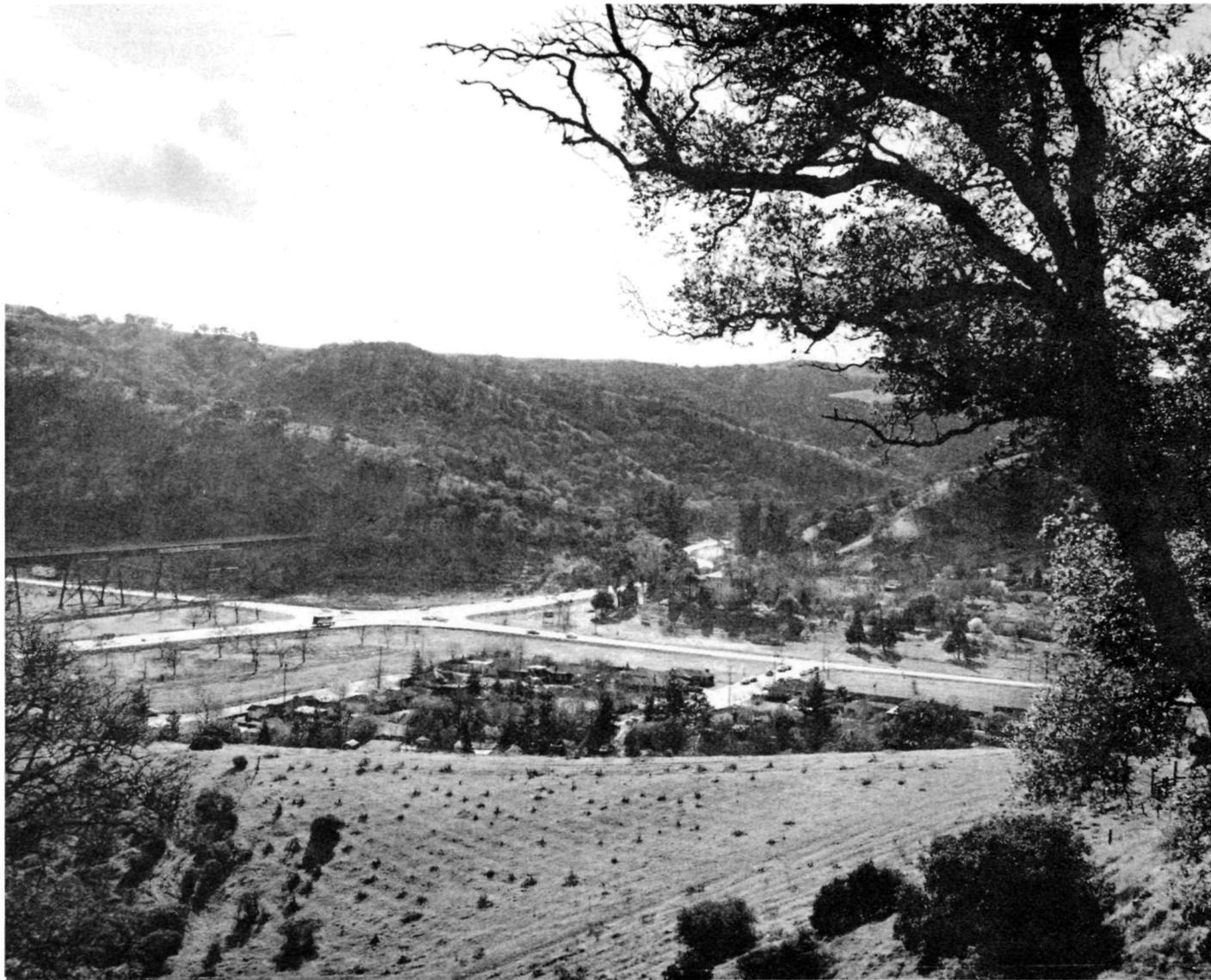
GPO 266407



Muir Home, east facade, California fan palms flanking entrance planted during Muir's time.

NPS Photo, 1961

GPO 966407



Alhambra Valley from the east, Muir home in the center. Proposed freeway follows route of State Highway #4 paralleling the railroad to the left of the Muir Home.

NPS Photo, 1963

GPO 966407



Muir Home from northeast. Large trees planted during Muir's time. Present entrance road in lower right corner.

NPS Photo, 1963



View south from Muir Home toward Santa Fe Railroad trestle. Freeway will be on a twenty foot fill on alignment with State Highway #4 in foreground. All trees to remain.

NPS Photo, 1963

GPO 966407

PLATE NOS. 5 and 6



Martinez Adobe from the east near Alhambra Creek. Freeway will cut through the ridge at open area left center.

NPS Photo, 1963

GPO 9664 J7



**Muir home from the west boundary of the Martinez Adobe tract, across Franklin Creek.**

**NPS Photo, 1963**



**Alhambra Valley from the west on approximate location of hiking and riding trail. Muir house in the center, roof of the Martinez adobe lower left among the trees. Toe of freeway fill to follow a line approximately from panel truck in foreground to large truck far right center.**

**NPS Photo, 1963**

GPO 966407



Muir home, east side, scaffold structure near roof for repair of eaves by present owner.

NPS Photo, 1963

GPC 966407

PLATE NO. 10



John Muir Home, stair hall from entrance.

H.A.B.S. Photo 1960



John Muir Home, west parlor. Vandal damage to onyx fireplace left unrepaired for interpretive purposes.

H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

GPO 966407



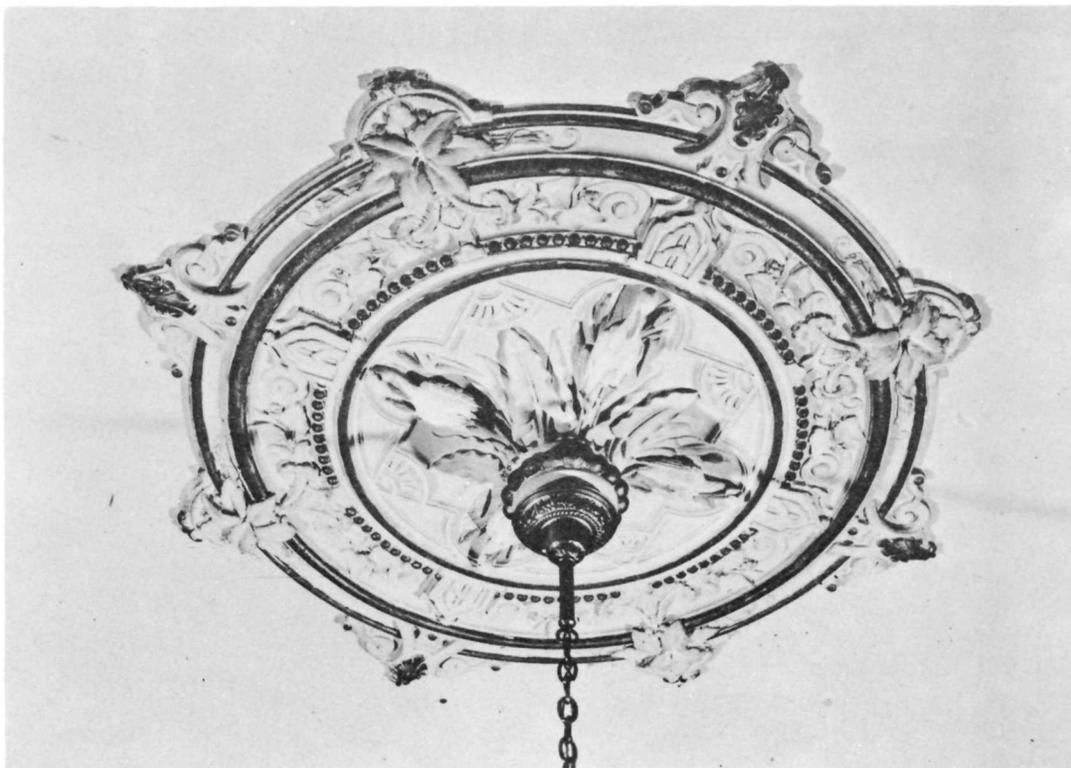
John Muir Home, 1st floor library.

H.A.B.S. Photo 1960



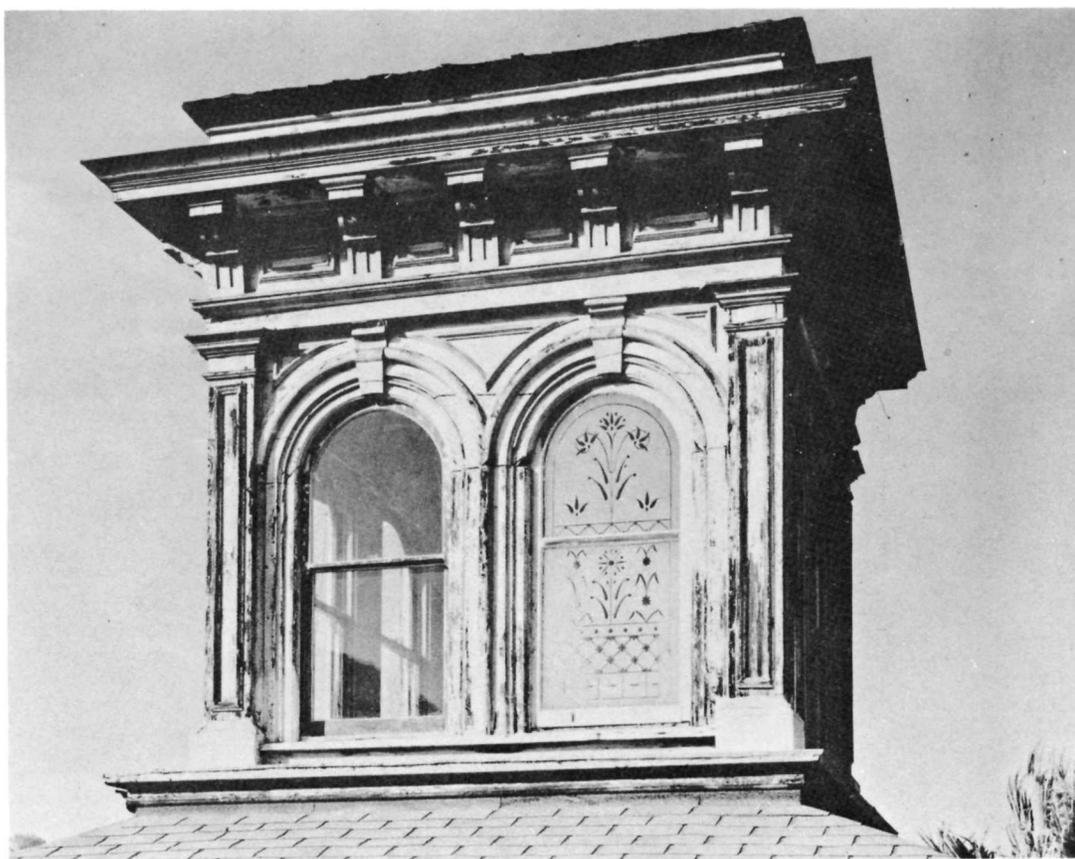
John Muir Home, 2nd floor "Study--den."

H.A.B.S. Photo 1960



John Muir Home, ceiling medallion in west parlor.

H.A.B.S. Photo 1960



Cupola, John Muir Home.

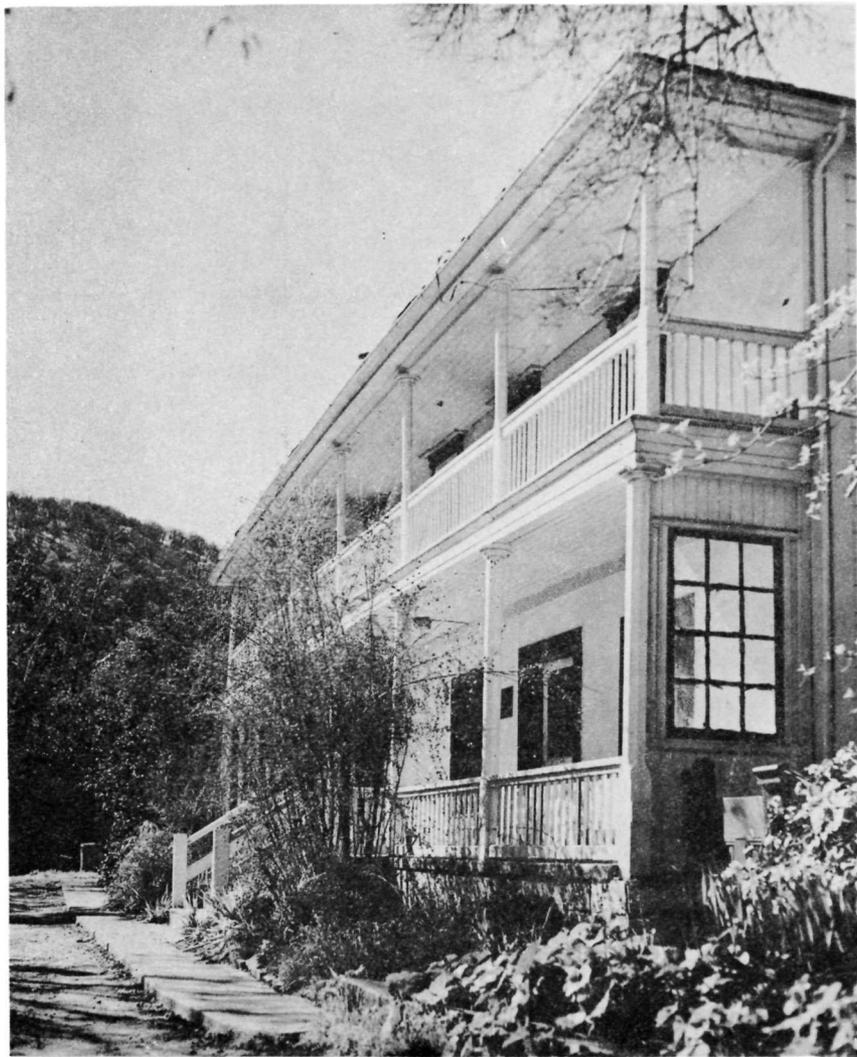
H.A.B.S. Photo 1960

GPO 966407

PLATE NOS. 15 and 16

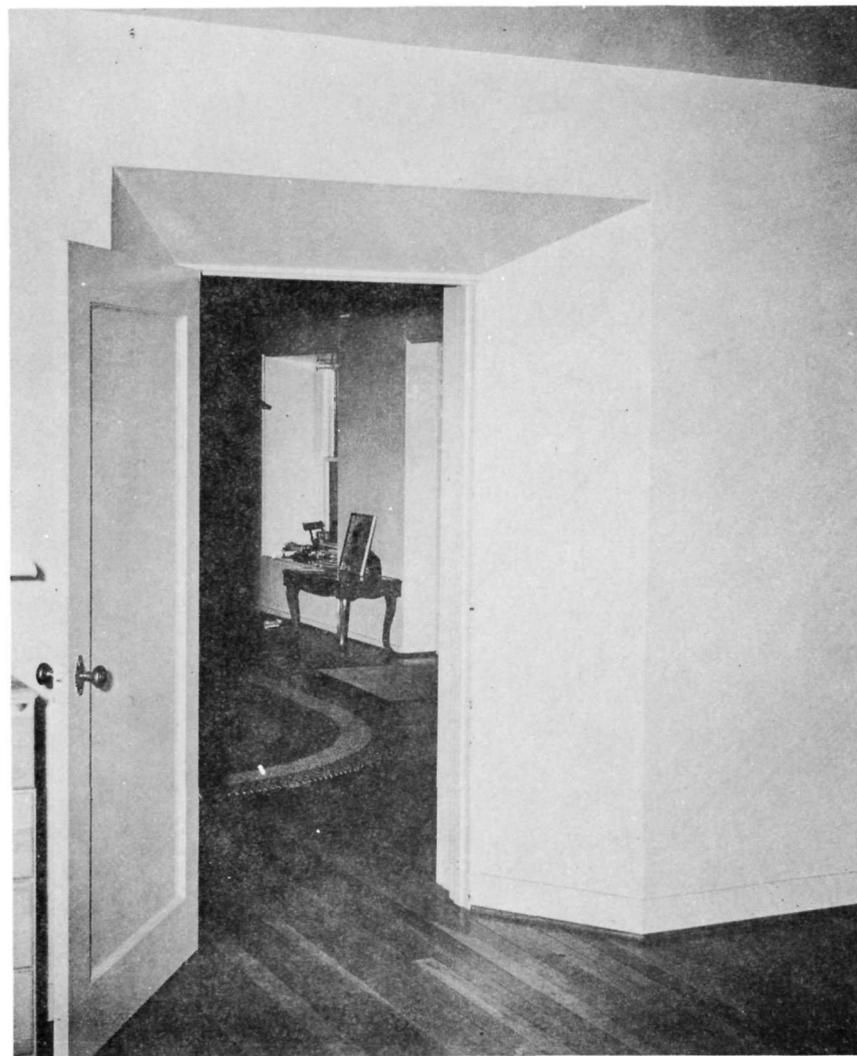


Martinez adobe, east facade.



Martinez adobe east facade.

NPS Photo, 1963



Martinez adobe interior 1st floor, showing adobe walls over two feet thick.

NPS Photo, 1963

# JOHN MUIR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE (PROPOSED)

## LEGEND

 AREA INCLUDED IN BILL NO. HR 439  
88TH CONGRESS

 BOUNDARY PROPOSED IN STUDY OF MARCH 1963

