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7 DESCRIPTION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Muir Historic Site is comprised of three major buildings of historic interest, the John Muir Home and Carriage House, and the Martinez Adobe. Several other structures including a windmill (proposed for reconstruction), the Franklin Creek Bridge, and Park Service buildings are of no historic significance, but also are located on 87 acres acquired by the National Park Service in 1964.

John Muir House

Built in 1882-3, the John Muir House is a two-story wood frame structure with an attic and a full basement, capped with a hipped roof and cupola. The house sits atop a hill above the rest of the property. Containing approximately 8000 square feet, the building is made up of essentially three portions, generally rectangular in character, which taper to the rear of the building. The main portion at the north end of the structure is 40 feet wide by 42 feet deep. The kitchen wing directly behind is approximately 19 by 25 feet. In 1890, the third and smallest section of three stories was added to the rear of the house. This section included a grounds storage room at grade, a maid's room, a practice room, and a water tank for domestic use.

The walls of the basement and foundation, as well as the intermediate load bearing piers, are of red burned brick. The basement floor, a concrete slab (recent) is approximately four feet below finished grade. Three of the existing fireplace foundations which extend out from the basement walls are of two types. That in the northeast corner contains a massive opening with a segmental arch. The two on the southwest wall are complete arches, with flues. One of the flues proceeds directly up from the top of the arch. The second flue is to the right of the arch. This evidence seems to indicate that at one time the basement could have been heated; or these could be the remnants of the earliest furnace (1938) which heated the first floor.

The wood frame wall construction is insulated for the entire first story with burned brick nogging between the studs. The floors of the first story are insulated with adobe laid between the floor joists. The beveled channel siding which covers the exterior of the house is neatly finished at the corners with quoins two inches thick. The rear three story addition is made up of two stories of brick with segmental arched windows and doors, and a wood frame third story.

The plan of the main portion of the house consists of a main hall with staircase, flanked by two rooms on each side: the parlor and dining room to the east; the paneled library and second parlor to the west. A door from the library leads to the porch on the west side, which is partially enclosed. Steps from that porch lead to the garden toward the front of the house. The original plans show a minor difference the steps had led to the garden on the west side. Whether the change in plans was made before construction or after is unknown. The conservatory on the east side is reached by a floor-length double-hung window from the dining room. One service porch with staircase is located to the rear of the conservatory leading into the kitchen. At one time a second access porch did lead up toward the library and into one of the small side rooms of the kitchen. This was apparently removed in the 1900 renovation when the addition was constructed and minor changes were made in the kitchen area. Form No. 10-300a (Řev. 10-74)

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The downstairs powder room, located between the dining room and the east parlor was removed after the 1906 earthquake, as was the dining room fireplace. The east parlor was thus made the same size as the west parlor, and both parlor entries from the main hall were enlarged into French doors.

On the second floor are seven bedrooms and a practice room, one lavatory and a tank room. Here only minor changes were made. The east bedroom, which Muir used, had more closet space according to the original plan. The closet space was removed, enlarging the next bedroom. Directly across from Muir's bedroom is the study where Muir did a great deal of his writing. The fireplace in this room is of imported white marble. The fireplace in the connecting bedroom to the south is made of brick with a piece of petrified wood embedded into it, and was rebuilt by Muir after the 1906 earthquake.

The main attic plan is open, with the water tank 9 feet by 5 feet 5 inches located at the southernmost portion of the building. A staircase rises up from the attic floor to the cupola, which houses a bell. The original roof of the Muir house was covered with redwood shingles, but it is now covered with composition shingles.

The house is in a good state of rep**air**, and is filled with some authentic and/or contemporary furniture. In the kitchen the brick and cast iron stove is the original, and is operable, although the kitchen facilities were altered somewhat by later owners. Muir installed electricity in the house in 1914. In the east parlor the original fireplace was destroyed in 1906 and has since been replaced. The white marble and onyx fireplace in the west parlor was partially restored. Other changes include modern bathroom facilities, and a LP gas heating system with new ducts installed in 1956. The new furnace was converted to natural gas in 1967.

Victorian Italianate in design, the structure has a formal and symmetrical facade. The entire plan is not symmetrical, because of the kitchen and 1900 addition, however this was the usual order of building in 19th century country houses. The potential flatness of the facade is relieved by the two oriel windows and the hexagonal porch on the first story. Each of the six windows of the bays is flanked by pilasters. The complete arches of the cupola windows are broken up by keystones, and are also flanked by pilasters. The lightness of many of the details such as the quoins, the delicacy of the finials and lattice work on the porch roof contributes to the emphasis on verticality, so typical of Victorian Italianate architecture. The use of the wood in imitation of stone and the mstored grey-green color of the house are usual 19th century devices.

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Carriage House

The Carriage House, now located 30 feet to the east of the Muir House, was probably built in 1891, and was moved in sections to its present site circa 1940. The original location of this one story wood frame structure was to the northwest of the main house. The dimensions are approximately 18 feet by 20 feet six inches. The structure's gable roof ran north to south originally. Two large doors at the south end admitted wagons and carriages. On the west side of the building a lean-to was added between 1891 and 1910. When the carriage house was moved to the former site of the woodshed and closer to the house, it was used for a garage, and later a shop and storage building. Since 1966 the National Park Service has been using the carriage house as a maintenance shop. The original wooden shingles have been replaced by sheet metal, the lean-to has been removed and a door added, and the large doors at the south gable end have been replaced by a solid wall. Other minor changes have been made to the structure for maintenance purposes.

Martinez Adobe

The Martinez Adobe, located in the northwest section of the entire historic property, was probably built in 1849 by Don Vicente Martinez, on a portion of the Rancho el Pinole which had been granted to his father Don Ignacio Martinez. In 1853 Martinez sold the property to Edward Franklin. Muir's father-in-law, John Strentzel, bought the land and house from Thomas Redfern in 1874. The dimensions of the two story adobe are irregular: 44 feet 6 inches in length, and width varying from 19 to 21 feet five inches. A two story porch encloses the structure four feet to the east and eight feet to the south. The one story wood frame additions to the rear of the house were built in at least two stages. Some confusion exists as to the exact construction history of these additions, which warrants more research at a future date. The kitchen-bathroom-bedroom addition measures 12 feet by 52 feet; the laundry room measures 10 feet by 12 feet. Both are on the west side of the structure. The stone foundation of the original structure supports the adobe walls, which vary from 24 to 30 inches in thickness. Because of damage from the 1906 earthquake, a wood frame wall replaces the original adobe to the north.

The plan of the first floor originally included just the dining room and parlor until the additions were constructed, probably between 1921 and 1955. The additions were built on concrete foundations, and concrete also was poured to cover part of the wooden lower porch and steps in the 1930s. Other structural changes include the installation of electric wiring probably in 1906, installation of plumbing in 1906 or 1907, changes in floor composition (earthen to oak flooring in the adobe proper) and interior changes in the upstairs bedrooms. Because of the four doors facing east and the one door facing south, there may have been more than two rooms on the second story. Further evidence of this is the recollection of a

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former resident. Also, because of the building's varying uses as a storehouse, residence for ranch employees, and home of Thomas and Wanda Hanna (son-in-law and daughter of John Muir), the probability of second floor interior changes increases. The roof of the adobe was originally covered with sawn shingles which have been restored by the National Park Service.

Recent structural evidence uncovered during restoration work has revealed that the two story porch of the east facade continued further around the south elevation than it does now. Apparantly when the kitchen and laundry room were added, some of the existing posts from that porch extension were used in the addition.

The two story adobe structure is of a typical California (Mexican) rancho style. The additive quality to the rear is not uncommon. An unusual feature however is the octagonal column and cap used on the porch. Octagons had come into popularity in architecture in the 1850s with the writings of Orson Squire Fowler, and thus could most probably be part of the original design.

Grounds

The Muir-Strentzel lands had been planted during Muir's time with more than 120 varieties of plants. A few of the original ones which Muir planted are still extant. Most of the grounds, however, are covered with a sample of the plants grown in the orchards and vineyards which covered the 2665 acre ranch from which John Muir made his fortune.

Bridge

Also located on the property is a bridge over Franklin Creek which was built to connect the Muir-Strentzel home and the Martinez Adobe, and thereby more easily consolidate the ranch. Probably constructed during 1882, the original bridge had simple abutments to support the upper portion of wooden beams and planks. The sides of the bridge were finished with wooden posts and railings. The bridge was rebuilt in 1967 with hidden steel beams and new plank flooring and railings, and is incorporated into the trail system at the Site.

Windmill

In 1967 the John Muir National Historic Site was given a windmill similar to the three originally located near the Muir home. This windmill is presently dismantled and will be reconstructed over one of the original wells which supplied water for domestic and irrigation purposes. The windmill is a wind-vane orienting, multiple short blade rotor, mounted on an open wooden frame tower. Form No. 10-300a (Řev. 10-74)

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Other Structures

Just south of the Martinez Adobe is a rectangular, modern, metal maintenance shed, constructed and used by the Park Service for vehicle storage. The National Park Service Visitor Center for John Muir National Historic Site is located at the base of the hill in the northeast corner of the property on Alhambra Road. The building, which provides space for offices and exhibits, a small lecture room and a sales desk, is a former veterinary clinic of modern design acquired by the Park Service in 1964. Neither of the structures is of historic or architectural merit, and while needed for administrative and maintenance functions, they do not contribute to the historic setting.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John Muir National Historic Site is of national significance in the fields of <u>conservation</u>, <u>literature</u>, <u>science</u> and <u>social and humanitarian concerns</u> because of Muir's extensive efforts to establish National Parks and to bring his environmental experiences to the public through literature.

The Site is of regional significance in the fields of <u>agriculture</u> and <u>architecture</u>. Located on the Site are a prime example of a late Victorian country house, one of the few left in the region, and an adobe (part wood frame) very typical of California-Mexican ranchos. In terms of agriculture, the area is unusual and contrasts with surrounding vegetation because of plantings by Muir and his father-in-law, Dr. John Strentzel.

The property was acquired by the federal government by an act of Congress (Public Law 88-547) stating that it should be designated "as the John Muir National Historic Site and shall be set aside as a public national memorial to John Muir in recognition of his efforts as a conservationist and erusader for national parks and reservations." The John Muir House became a California Historical Landmark in 1939; the Martinez Adobe was also accepted in 1953.

John Muir was born in 1838 in Scotland and spent most of his childhood in Wisconsin. His serious nature studies, specifically of glaciers and forests, began in 1868 when he reached the Sierra. In 1880, Muir married Louie Strentzel, daughter of Dr. John Strentzel (known as the "Father of California Horticulture"). Dr. Strentzel started the relatively small fruit plantation which later grew into the 2665 acre Muir-Strentzel ranch. At the time Muir married Louie, he was already an established naturalist and writer. The Muirs and Strentzels shared the same Dutch-style farmhouse, located about a mile south of the National Historic Site, until 1882. At this time, Dr. Strentzel's new Victorian house was completed, sitting on a small hill overlooking the Martinez Adobe, which he had acquired in 1874.

The wood frame house was designed by Wolfe & Son, Architects, of San Francisco, and was constructed by the contracting firm of Sylvesters and Langabee, also of San Francisco. John Strentzel's hand in the design of the house has not yet been clarified, however he is known to have made suggestions about the foundation construction and family legend maintains that he designed it.

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Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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John and Louie Muir lived in the older farmhouse until 1890, when Dr. Strentzel died and Mrs. Strentzel asked them to join her in what is now known as the John Muir House. By that time Muir was financially independent. He had begun working in the Strentzel orchards the day after his wedding, and through good business sense had amassed a small fortune. Because of this he was able to continue his extensive travelling. Upon returning from his trips, most of his writing was done in the "old library den" on the second floor of the Muir house. Except for his time spent travelling, Muir lived and worked in the house. Usually he would walk down the hill two or three times a day to visit his daughter's family living in the Martinez Adobe. After his death in 1914, the properties belonging to Muir and his family were divided and eventually sold for development. In 1964 the National Park Service acquired the property and have since completed a great deal of needed restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance.

Conservation

John Muir was responsible for the establishment of several national parks. In his study on the second floor of the main house, Muir met with other conservation leaders who fought for the thirteen Forest Reserves established by Grover Cleveland, and who fought in vain to save Hetch Hetchy and the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne. The Reserves totalled more than 21 million acres, and served as the foundation for the U.S. Forest Service. The conservationists planned the retrocession of Yosemite to the federal government because of the environmental damage being done by ranchers, sheepmen, tourists and resort owners while it was under state control. Muir's influence on Theodore Roosevelt was so great that after a 1903 meeting in Yosemite, Roosevelt began a course of action which later established 5 National Parks, 23 National Monuments and 148 million acres of National Forest during his presidential term. Muir is directly connected with the establishment of the Petrified Forest, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Sequoia and Mount Rainier National Parks and Monuments.

Science

Through his exhaustive scientific studies, John Muir was the first to recognize and describe the glacial origins of the Yosemite Valley, contrary to the theories of most geologists of his day. He was also a pioneer explorer and discovered the living glaciers of the Sierra and several of the Alaskan Icefields, which he then mapped. Other of his contributions to science have yet to be evaluated, although he did contribute information to Charles Sargent's <u>Silva</u> and sent floral specimens to Asa Gray.

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Literature, Social and Humanitarian Concerns

Muir's articles which appeared in the <u>New York Tribune</u>, <u>Harper's</u>, the <u>Overland</u> <u>Monthly</u>, the <u>San Francisco Bulletin</u>, and the <u>Atlantic Monthly</u> introduced the "life and phenomena of the natural world" of the American landscape to the public. Muir's interpretation of nature were read by thousands in those publications and later in his ten books which incorporated many of these articles. His books include <u>The Mountains of California</u> (1898), <u>Our National Parks</u> (1902), <u>Travels in Alaska</u>, <u>The Yosemite</u> (1912), <u>The Story of My Boyhood and Youth</u> (1913), <u>A Thousand Mile Walk</u> <u>to the Gulf</u>, <u>The Cruise of the Corwin</u>, <u>Steep Trails</u>, <u>My First Summer in the Sierra</u> and <u>Stickeen</u>, his highly popular dog story. Because of his extensive conservation work, he was able to save some of the most beautiful areas of the Western United States for enjoyment and proper use by future generations. The popularity of his newspaper and magazine articles was due in part to his knowledge of the combination of natural and human values.

Architecture

The John Muir House is a Victorian Italianate structure with a formal, symmetrical facade reflecting the formality of the society of which it is a product. Many of the architectural elements of the structure such as the quoins, arched windows and pilasters were popularized during the 1860s in the Renaissance Revival. Here, however, those elements are not separated, chosen and specifically copied as they were in the Renaissance Revival. Instead, the Victorian emphasis allows more inventiveness in the design and use of those elements which relieve the architectural details of the earlier, more structured rules of architecture. The Muir House is of regional architectural significance since it is one of a vanishing group of country houses of Victorian Italianate design left in this area of California. Nearly all of John Muir's writing was done in this house.

The Martinez Adobe is of state significance, as a fine example of a California-Mexican style rancho. This informal building with its medieval additive quality is important in the local history of the town of Martinez. The Adobe was built by the son of the original grantee on a portion of the Spanish land grant.

Agriculture

The existing vegetation at the Site was planted during the Muir-Strentzel ownership, by subsequent owners and by the National Park Service. The more than 120 species of plants provides a sampling of the exotic types grown by Muir and Strentzel; thus some of the vegetation is radically different than that of the surrounding area. The Environmental Living Program of the State and National Parks of Arizona and California conducts and overnight program at the John Muir National Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

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Site for school children. The program allows them to work in the orchards and gardens and gain a first hand knowledge of the land.

Other Significance

Named after John Muir are the Muir Woods National Monument and the John Muir Trail in California, and the Muir Glacier in Alaska, all of which are nationally known. Hundreds of local place names in California are also named after him. A John Muir 5¢ postage stamp was issued by the U.S. Postal Service in 1964.

WELLS AND WINDMILLS AT JOHN MUIR NHS

<u>Historv</u>

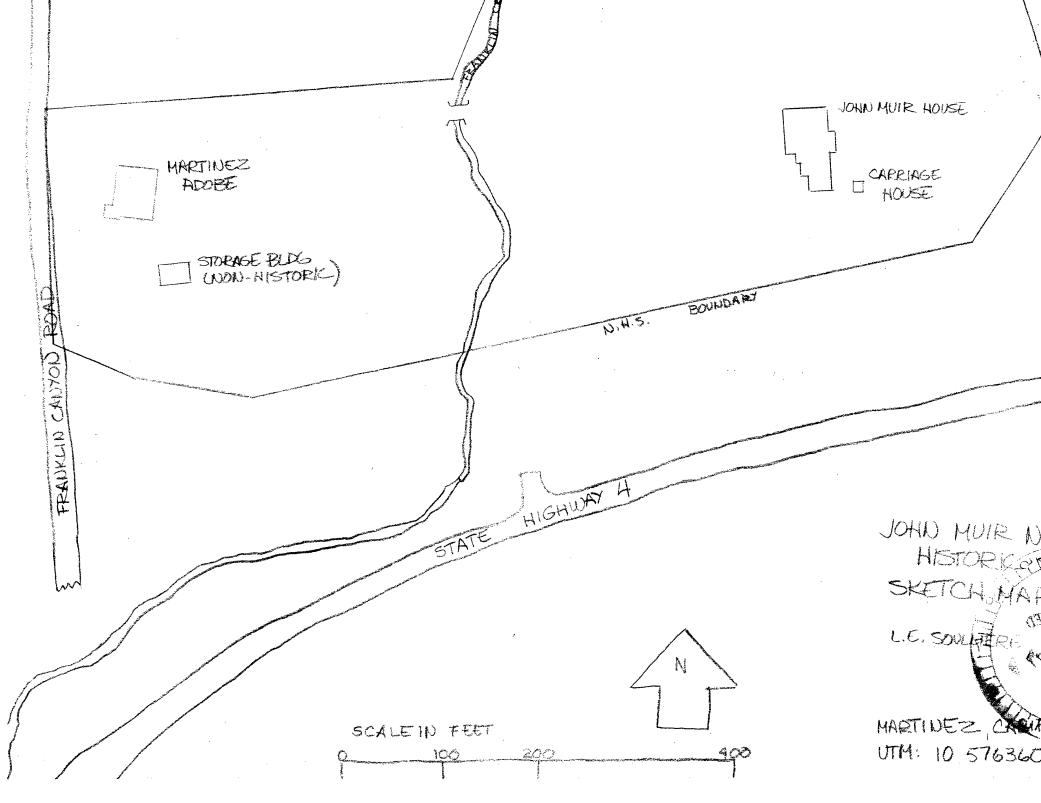
During the period (1890-1914) in which John Muir occupied the Alhambra Valley house built by his father-in-law in 1882, two dug wells provided water for the house and surrounding grounds.

According to John Seseroides, who plotted well logs on the wells in 1969, the Franklin Creek Well was dug prior to 1884 and the Alhambra Avenue Well was dug prior to 1901. A third well on the site was drilled after 1915. The Franklin Creek Well with windmill appears in a photograph dated 1885. Both wells and windmills appear in a photograph dated ca. 1910.

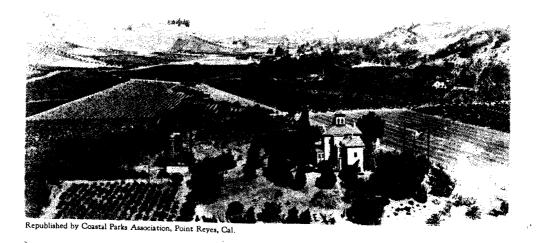
According to Barbara Kreiss Schulz, whose family owned the Muir house between 1937 and 1955, her brother, Roderick Kreiss, dismantled a dilapidated windmill on the Franklin Creek Well. She believes that occurred about 1930. (Although the family did not buy the house until 1937, it is entirely possible that they rented it from the estate of the previous owner, Henry J. Curry, who died in 1930.) Mrs. Schulz does not recall a windmill on the Alhambra Avenue Well. (Telephone interview between Superintendent Omundson and Mrs. Schulz on December 9, 1977.)

Proposed restoration

The Master Plan (June 1976) includes a windmill reconstruction. This is construed as the Franklin Creek Well windmill. Because the east boundary fence is located approximately two feet from the Alhambra Avenue Well, it is not feasible to restore the windmill for that well. In 1967 a windmill, which had been erected in 1932 in nearby Walnut Creek, was donated to the site. Its assemby consists of an 18-blade wheel, a vane labeled Aeromotor, gear and pump components, and several pieces of the wooden frame structure. Plans for the supporting wood structure were drawn by Historic Architect Louis Koue. A \$1,000 donation was recently received toward the reconstruction.



Alhambra Valley. John Muir's Residence in Foreground, Martinez, Cal.



ca. 1910

1 - Franklin Creek Well and Windmill

2 - Alhambra Avenue Well and Windmill