

(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 16000576

Date Listed: 08/15/2016

Muir, John Memorial Shelter  
Property Name


Fresno  
County

CA  
State

N/A

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

8/15/2016  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

**Significance:**

The appropriate Period of Significance is limited to: 1930-1933.  
[This period acknowledges the significant events associated with dedication of the shelter as a commemorative site in association with John Muir and is consistent with opinions provided by the FPO and SHPO in their comments.]

The Significant Dates are limited to 1930 and 1933, deleting 1966, which falls outside the period of significance and only reflects continuing use.

The appropriate Areas of Significance are clarified to reflect: *Architecture, Conservation, and Recreation/Entertainment.*  
[This serves to clarify inconsistencies within the current nomination and FPO/SHPO comments.]

These clarifications were confirmed with the NPS FPO office.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

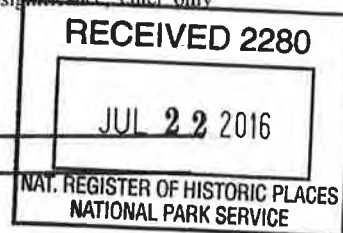
National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Muir, John, Memorial Shelter

Other names/site number: Muir Hut

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: Grant Grove Village in Kings Canyon National Park, Highway 180

City or town: Grant Grove State: California County: Fresno

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

<u>Lee Ann Jones for Joy Beasley/jps</u>	<u>7/21/2016</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>National Park Service</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<u>Jenan Saunders</u>	<u>5/22/16</u>
Jenan Saunders, commenting official	Date
<u>Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer</u>	<u>CA State Office of Historic Preservation</u>
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

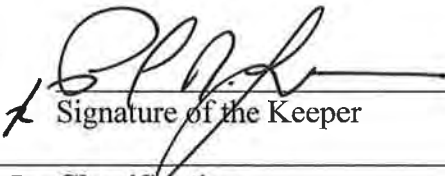
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

8/15/2016  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker  
commemorative monument/marker

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation  
storm shelter

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation  
storm shelter

RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker  
commemorative monument/marker

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Italian Trullo Hut Tradition

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Stone: Sierra Granite

Mortar: Portland cement, river sand, and granite dust

Wood: California White Oak (*Quercus lobata*)

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The John Muir Memorial Shelter is a rustic, freestanding octagonal stone structure with a steep, conically shaped corbelled stone roof. The shelter owes its form and detailing to the seventeenth century Italian Trullo Hut building tradition concentrated in the Apulia region of southern Italy. The stone structure encloses a single open chamber with a sixteen-foot high corbelled stone ceiling, built-in perimeter stone seating, and a stone fireplace with raised hearth and external chimney. The load-bearing masonry shelter measures 21' by 21' across its base exterior dimensions. The shelter has an entry Dutch door facing east, a single fixed-pane window facing north, and a segmental-arched granite fireplace and hearth facing south. The shelter's historic integrity remains intact from 1930: its original coursed granite fieldstone octagonal walls are uncompromised; its distinctive beehive-shaped granite roof has maintained its original conical form and steep slope; and the original oak entrance door and window both have been preserved. The memorial shelter was sited strategically at the Muir Pass saddle, at an elevation of 11,955 feet. It sits in close proximity to the John Muir Trail (JMT), about thirty feet away, within the park boundary of Kings Canyon National Park in Fresno County, California. The remote site at

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the crest of the Sierra Nevada range is accessible only by foot, horseback or by helicopter. The nearest automobile access and trailhead is at Florence Lake, located about 23 miles to the northwest. The nearest town is Bishop, CA, located about 41 trail miles to the northeast. Bishop is reached by foot from Muir Pass by following the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) north to the South Lake Trail intersection, then east to Bishop. Views from the Shelter include Mount Solomons to the south-southwest and Mount Warlow to the north. Wanda Lake is west of Muir Pass and Helen Lake is to the northeast.

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### **Narrative Description**

The John Muir Memorial Shelter was conceived to serve both as a commemorative memorial and an emergency dwelling for hikers and backpackers. It was erected by the Sierra Club in 1930 at the top of the Muir Pass, at the lofty elevation of 11,955 feet above sea level. Muir Pass, which separates the Evolution Basin and the Middle Fork of the Kings River, is approximately the halfway point of the 212 mile long John Muir Trail (JMT). The Muir Memorial Shelter's fieldstone character blends harmoniously with its surrounding granite outcroppings in this high Alpine Zone of the Sierra Nevada, approximately two thousand feet above the tree line. The picturesque Alpine landscape context for the shelter's site selection in 1930 is extraordinary for its expansive treeless vistas of glacial carved granite canyons, silhouetted alpine peaks, and several crystalline lakes (such as Helen and Wanda Lakes, named after Muir's two daughters) extending as far as the eye can see. The 360 degree view from the saddle of Muir Pass provides no evidence of trees or vegetation in any direction. The viewshed from Muir Pass is purported to be the only location on the JMT where the treeless austere landscape dominates the entire horizon. Thus the shelter's elevated and remote siting at Muir Pass is an important character-defining contextual feature of the Trullo structure. Those that make the arduous climb to the pass are rewarded, by William Colby's intention, with an unparalleled panoramic view of Sierra Alpine grandeur. The glacier-clad Mt. Goddard and the north face of the multihued Goddard Divide provide an impressive backdrop to the southwest, while the string of summits of Mount Huxley, Spencer, Darwin and Mendel line the northeast horizon. These dramatic viewsheds epitomize the "Range of Light" qualities that Muir famously ascribed to the Sierra Nevada.

The single-cell octagonal shelter rises 16'-0" from the granite paver floor to the conical peak of the roof. Its load-bearing masonry walls are constructed of coursed granite fieldstone set with a high-strength Portland cement mortar. Its stout 2-1/2' thick octagonal walls provide a stable base to support the steep (14:12 sloped) corbelled granite roof. In plan, the exterior footprint of the structure forms a 21' by 21' truncated square. Its interior floor plan reduces to a 16' by 16' octagon, owing to the hut's thick perimeter walls. The eight facets of its octagonal walls are not equal. Four of the interior walls measure eight feet across, while the other four truncated walls, measure 6' in width. A granite fireplace, hearth, and mantel ensemble on the south wall is the interior's primary focal point. Directly opposite the fireplace, a 2' by 2' oak framed single-pane window sits within the north wall. The original 1930 entrance door is a 2'-6" wide by 6' high oak-paneled Dutch door. The upper leaf of the door features three vertical lights. The door's jamb is recessed two feet within the masonry opening of the east wall. A granite stepped

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chimney rises over the south wall to a chimney cap height 14'-0" above finish floor. Four smoke outlets measuring 8" x 12" vent directly under a pyramidal granite chimney cap.

### **Alterations and Integrity**

The shelter's historic integrity remains intact from 1930: the shelter has remained unchanged in form, plan, and details. Its original coursed granite fieldstone octagonal walls are uncompromised; its distinctive beehive-shaped granite roof has maintained its original conical form and steep slope; the corbelled granite chimney is intact, and the original oak entrance door and window both have been preserved. Despite weathering many years of intense wind, rain and snow at the 12,000 foot-elevation, only entry door rebuilding, window repairs and minimal stone repointing has been required.

There are only two minor exceptions to the shelter's pristine integrity. An obelisk-shaped granite finial once projected 22" above the peak of the roof. It disappeared from the roof sometime after 1960. The finial is the only original character-defining detail that has been lost since its 1930 construction. During the summer of 1985 a Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI) restoration work crew accomplished some much-needed granite repointing work. In August 2013 another SEKI restoration crew made carpentry repairs to the entry door and north window. They also closed off the firebox with granite fieldstone and mortar to prevent flue access by resourceful marmots, and to restrict campfires above 10,000 feet, consistent with the park's policy within Alpine Zone Wilderness.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

RECREATION

CONSERVATION

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1930-1933

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1930 - construction

1933 - dedication

1966 – 50 year historic

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Gutterson, Henry H.

Wenz, Michael

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The John Muir Memorial Shelter is eligible for the National Register at the national level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Conservation and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The only building conceived and erected by the Sierra Club to honor its first President and co-founder, John Muir, the shelter is located at the proximate mid-point of the John Muir Trail (JMT) section of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). The trail was established through the Club's lobbying efforts in 1915, a year after Muir's death, and thus it was named in his honor. Muir is regarded by modern environmental historians as the most influential American conservationist in the nation's history and "the father" of the National Park Service. The Muir Memorial Shelter is significant under Criterion A: Conservation as the sole commemorative structure in the United States erected to pay tribute to the pioneering role played by Muir and the Sierra Club in the American conservation movement and the stewardship of natural resources. The shelter is further significant under Criterion C: Architecture for its distinctive Italian-derived Trullo Hut design and its indigenous rustic stone construction. It is one of two mountain shelters erected in the United States in the Italian Trullo Hut design tradition, and the only one to provide the communal features of a centralized hearth, decorative fireplace mantel and perimeter seating for thirty. Its native granite fieldstone materials are in visual harmony with its high Alpine environment, thus meeting the principles set forth by the NPS landscape division in the late 1920s to reflect the practices of Park Rustic architecture. The shelter was designed by Henry Gutterson who was among the San Francisco Bay Area architects to develop a distinctive style based upon Arts & Crafts design that was extremely influential in the development of park architecture. Significant as well for its recreational association with national parks and its architectural value as a strategically sited mountain shelter, independent of its association with John Muir, the property also meets Criteria Consideration F. The shelter's period of significance period of significance is from 1930 to 1966, beginning with its design and construction in 1930 and extending to its fifty-year-old historic threshold of 1966. which recognizes the continuous commemorative function and significance of the resource.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**CRITERION A: CONSERVATION**

The Muir Memorial Shelter is the one and only commemorative memorial structure built in the United States after John Muir's death in 1915 to honor the man's lasting contributions in the advancement of the nation's conservation movement. The unusual construction project was lead by Muir's protégé, Sierra Club High Trip leader and Secretary William Colby. The construction of the rustic memorial shelter in the summer of 1930, at the beginning of the nation's Great Depression, underscores the determination of many of Muir's Sierra Club admirers to erect a fitting memorial to him, dramatically situated at the crest of his beloved Sierra Nevada mountains. Neither the John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez, CA nor the Muir Woods National Monument in Marin County, CA offer a similar post-mortem commemorative memorial association. Neither of those famous Muir historic sites features a symbolic dwelling erected for the purpose of memorializing the man. The Muir Memorial Shelter is therefore nationally important as a unique commemorative property erected high in the Sierra Wilderness, the sole architectural feature along the John Muir Trail.

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At the time that John Muir established the Sierra Club in 1892 little was recorded about the Sierra Nevada Mountains and few had ventured into them, other than shepherders and their stock. The impact of the latter was among the concerns of the Club members and a motivation for their push for protections. In so doing, the Club worked to create public awareness and interest in hiking and outdoor recreation that they thought could lead to government regulation of the area and eventually the creation of parks and wilderness areas. Instrumental to this effort was the creation of hiking trails. Beginning through individual efforts and small hiking parties the mapping of trails was begun. Muir's studies and publications, more than any other efforts, brought public attention to the beauty and importance of this area, while Joseph LeConte helped to blaze the early trails. Before the creation of the National Park Service, the Sierra Club was responsible for the recession of the Yosemite Valley to the Federal Government from the state of California in 1905.

In 1901, the Sierra Club began annual month-long outings or excursions to remote portions of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, guided only by geological survey maps. Traveling "untrammelled" ground through inaccessible areas was a rewarding but arduous task, requiring the use of pack animals to carry supplies and camping equipment. As the Club's membership grew, so did the recognition of, and support for, federal parks and wilderness areas. The Sierra Club effectively became a lobbying group for the Forest Service beginning in the 1890s, and later for the National Park Service as interest grew from conservation to encompass recreation. Muir's publications, in particular *Our National Parks* published in 1901, caught the attention of then-president Theodore Roosevelt who would eventually spearhead the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. The Club supported the bill that created the NPS, and Club member Stephen Tyng Mather became its first director. The Sierra Club lobbied Congress for the creation of Kings Canyon National Park, launching a public campaign in 1935 that included the publication of a pamphlet entitled *The Kings River Region Should Be a National Park*. The Club also had a hand in the establishment of the Glacier, Mt. Rainier, and Olympic National Parks, among others, and for the extensions of many more park sites. The Sierra Club continues to play a vital role in assisting NPS in fulfilling its mission.

The history of the Muir Trail dates to the 1880s when individuals such as Theodore Solomons first envisioned a high-elevation trail following the spine of the Sierra Nevada passable by herders and livestock. Prior to that, government surveyors tasked with preparing geological surveys first explored the area in the 1860s identifying some of the areas that would later form the pass. John Muir was among the first to venture into this remote backcountry purely for the sake of conservation and recreation. He was followed by future Sierra Club members Joseph LeConte and Bolton Brown who were intent on finding a route that would link the Yosemite Valley and Kings Canyon. While various passable sections of the final trail were identified it was not until the Sierra Club successfully lobbied the California Legislature for funding in 1914 that work began on a trail that could facilitate complete access between these two points. A trail through major sections, including the development of many new sections of the trail, was

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completed by 1916. However, it was 1930 before most of the trail was completed; the final section, the Golden Staircase, was not completed until 1938.

Timely inspiration for the Muir Memorial occurred in early 1930, when the Secretary of the Sierra Club William Colby opened his February, 1930 issue of National Geographic Magazine and discovered an article entitled “The Stone Beehive Homes of the Italian Heel.” Impressed by the exotic vernacular stone architecture, Colby envisioned a granite version of the Trullo hut to be constructed at Muir Pass as a commemorative memorial to John Muir as well as a functional shelter for hikers and backpackers. The strategic setting at the apex of Muir Pass was intentional: to place the memorial at the proximate midpoint of the John Muir Trail in honor of Muir's contributions to the Sierra Nevada's wilderness conservation movement.

The Muir Memorial Shelter was conceived by William E. Colby and designed by Henry Gutterson. Colby worked for the Sierra Club for more than sixty years in various capacities including lawyer, director, recording secretary and supporter. He is credited with beginning the Club's annual hiking or “High Trips” that initiated their outing programs and became the training ground for emerging club leaders. Colby contributed substantially to the establishment of Kings Canyon and other national parks in the west and was the first recipient of the Club's John Muir Award.

Architect Henry Gutterson translated Colby's seminal idea into buildable architectural form at a ~12,000 foot high Sierra Nevada elevation. Gutterson was born in 1884. He graduated from Berkeley High School and the University of California's School of Architecture before attending the acclaimed École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, from 1906 to 1909. He worked briefly in New York for architect Grosvenor Atterbury before returning to the San Francisco-Bay area. He served on the design staff for the Panama Pacific Exposition before establishing his own practice. His design work consisted mostly of residential structures including the award-winning Hart Weaver House. Among his other masterpieces is Berkeley's Romanesque style Second Church of Christ Science, built in 1926. His body of Arts and Crafts style work is characterized by its subdued, naturalistic forms maintained by classically inspired proportion and massing.

In preparing construction documents for the Muir Shelter, Gutterson brought a sophisticated understanding of the Trullo hut building type to the project. In the spring of 1930 he produced a single sheet of pencil-rendered construction drawings that included two floor plans, a front elevation, building section, and details of the conical stone roof of the shelter to guide the masons and carpenters. Gutterson also executed a pencil perspective rendering of the Trullo-style shelter, set in the proposed rocky, treeless setting of Muir Pass. Gutterson's construction drawings and rendering assured the project's ultimate success. The rendering was Gutterson's opportunity to give emotive expression to the shelter's commemorative memorial function.

In two critical structural details, Gutterson adapted the vernacular Italian dry-stack masonry to work in the hostile alpine-zone climate of the California Sierra Nevada. First, instead of dry-stacking the granite fieldstone, as was the Italian tradition, Gutterson specified a high-strength Portland cement mortar to firmly bind the local granite fieldstone walls and roof. Second, to

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further reinforce the steep beehive-shaped corbelled stone roof, he designed two steel cables to serve as tension rings at the midsection of the beehive roof. Gutterson's critical modifications to the lowland Italian building tradition gave the shelter's masonry wall added structural integrity and the roof tensile strength to help withstand the harsh freeze-thaw conditions that occur at Muir Pass.

The Sierra Club, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, constructed the John Muir Memorial Shelter in the summers of 1930 and 1931. Led by master mason Mike Wenz, a U.S. Forest Service construction crew erected the memorial shelter during the summer of 1930. The remote location of the Shelter, a full two-hike from the nearest accessible point, complicated the construction process. All building materials, other than the granite gathered from the immediate site had to be transported several miles by mule.

According to one account, "It is hard to picture fully the hardships experienced by the workmen. The shelter stands squarely on the summit of Muir Pass, between the watershed of the Kings and the San Joaquin Rivers, at an elevation of 12,059 feet (later revised by USGS to 11,955 ft.). Since it is several miles above all timber, fuel as well as building materials had to be packed to the site on mules. All sand for mortar was packed nine miles, and during the last of the season even water had to be packed two and one-half miles. The trip from the end of the last road took four days, and much of the time an alternate had to be made between each regular trip to bring fuel up from the nearest timber supply. It is then not surprising that the packing costs exceeded all other costs."<sup>1</sup>

The difficulties in delivering construction materials to the site speak to both the dedication of the Sierra Club to honoring Muir's memory and to the need for a storm shelter at this location. The interior woodworking, the installation of the entry door and jamb and the single pane window and jamb, were completed during the summer of 1931. The John Muir Memorial Shelter was dedicated in July 1933.

### **CRITERION C: Significance in Architecture**

The John Muir Memorial Shelter is significant for its distinctive Italian Trullo Hut design and indigenous rustic construction. The Trullo style architecture was derived from the vernacular fieldstone drystack building tradition practiced in the Apulia region of southern Italy during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, the Shelter is erected of indigenous materials in harmony with its environment, in the then-emerging tradition of Park Rustic and naturalistic landscape architecture design. The decision to erect the Muir Memorial Shelter in the Trullo Hut architectural style was conceived by then Sierra Club Secretary William E. Colby in February 1930, translated into construction documents by Beaux-Arts trained architect Henry Gutterson in May 1930, and constructed by a select masonry crew provided by the U.S. Forest Service during the summer of 1930. There are only two Trullo Hut-style buildings in the United States: the Agnes Vaille Shelter, built in 1927, and the Muir Memorial Shelter, built in 1930.

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<sup>1</sup> Colby, William E., Notes and Correspondence (Sierra Club Bulletin Volume XVI, February, 1931), 98.

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Both serve as commemorative memorials as well as high mountain emergency shelters. The Agnes Vaille Shelter, erected on Long's Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park, was built to honor a pioneering woman mountaineer, Agnes Vaille who perished tragically in a climbing accident on the 14,259 high mountain in 1927.

The Trullo hut typology is characterized by massive, load-bearing fieldstone perimeter walls and a steeply sloped, beehive-shaped conical stone roof. As envisioned by the architect Gutterson, the perimeter walls of the Muir Hut are 2'-6" in width. The roof pitch was designed to be a steep 18:12 pitch, as shown in Gutterson's building elevation. However, as the Muir Hut's roof was actually constructed, the actual roof pitch was not so steep. It measures close to 14:12 in slope. The structural motivation for the Trullo hut's steep roof pitch was to lessen its tendency to collapse by checking the horizontal forces acting on the corbelled fieldstone roof. To increase the strength of the roof assembly further, Gutterson prescribed Portland cement, river sand and granite dust for the high-strength mortar specification. Extreme winds, severe temperature fluctuations and freeze-thaw cycles at the high altitude settings made it necessary to deviate from the traditional Italian "drystack" mortarless construction. Adding the high-strength Portland cement mortar was a crucial modification from the traditional Trullo hut drystack masonry methodology. While a drystack stone construction method was appropriate for the warm Mediterranean Trullo hut climate, it was not viable for the high altitude application at Muir Pass.

Architect Henry Gutterson conceived the octagonal interior floor plate as a stone-vaulted single chamber with four truncated corners, dimensioned originally at 12'-0" by 12'-0" in both long axes. During the construction process, the master mason, Mike Wenz, enlarged the interior chamber's footprint to 16'-0" by 16'-0", enlarging the room from 144 to 256 square feet. Curiously, Gutterson did not include any windows in his floor plan. That omission was corrected during the construction phase: a 2'-0" by 2'-0" window was inserted into the north wall to bring additional daylight into the dimly lit chamber. Gutterson's scheme also called for a large fireplace to be constructed against the south wall. A raised granite hearth and segmental-arched granite fireplace surround were detailed separately on his drawing, along with a massive fieldstone chimney rising up to a 13'-0" high chimney cap above the south wall.

The stone arched fireplace surround and projecting granite chimney were constructed as Gutterson detailed and dimensioned them. The segmental arched granite hearth and massive exterior chimney gave the Muir Shelter added sculptural form. The fireplace and chimney features transformed the cold stone chamber into a more habitable dwelling. Besides offering protection from gale force winds and whiteout snow conditions at the pass, the ability to build a fire within the chamber provided a creature comfort unexpected at the barren pass. Having an elegant fireplace and mantel assembly within the Muir Memorial Shelter distinguishes it from its Colorado sister hut, the Agnes Vaille Shelter, which does not have a fireplace.

On the shelter's primary façade, its East Elevation, Gutterson's drawing indicates that he envisioned installing a massive granite lintel over the entry portal. Such a monolithic piece of granite would have weighed over 3,500 pounds, well beyond the lifting capacity of the masonry

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crew laboring at Muir Pass. The lead mason Mike Wenz substituted a much more slender granite lintel, downscaling Gutterson's monumental vision. Beyond this substitution, the architectural and engineering solutions that produced such a durable Muir Memorial Shelter were owing to the insightful design skills of architect Henry H. Gutterson.

Because the structure was constructed using indigenous materials so as to be in harmony with its environment, the Muir Memorial Shelter meets the principles set forth by the NPS landscape division in the late 1920s to reflect the practices of Park Rustic, and naturalistic landscape architecture. In fact, it was designed by Henry Gutterson who was among the San Francisco Bay Area architects to develop a distinctive style based upon Arts & Crafts design that was extremely influential in the development of park architecture. The leader of this group was Bernard Maybeck, whose work—like that of his colleagues and protégés—was characterized by the use of indigenous wood and stone, accommodation with the environmental setting, the use of beams, trusses, and steeply pitched roofs to create vaulted, open interior spaces, and handcraftsmanship. Their architectural achievements marked an important step in the evolutionary development of a distinctive Park Rustic design. According to landscape historian Linda McClelland, “The work of Maybeck and the other Bay Area architects was an important link between the Shingle style and national park architecture. These practitioners used forms such as the octagon and hexagon and explored the relationships of space, site, view, and native materials that were in keeping with the Shingle style principles. Maybeck made significant advances in the relationship of interior space, external setting, structural design, and light—advances that would influence national park design.”

With regard to the shelter's setting, the John Muir Trail section of the Pacific Crest Trail is a 211-mile-long route through the Sierra Nevada in California. The trail leads from Yosemite National Park through the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness Areas, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, terminating at Mount Whitney. Said to contain the finest mountain scenery of any trail in the United States, the John Muir Trail is described as "America's most famous trail." Thus the Muir Trail linked two important locations that were the focus of John Muir's extensive research and conservation work. Although Muir traveled the world, it was California's Sierra Nevada and Yosemite Valley that most captured his imagination. It was here that he discovered a living glacier in 1871 and shortly thereafter began a series of articles entitled “Studies in the Sierra.” Muir published 300 articles and 10 major books, including *Our National Parks* published in 1901, expounding his naturalist philosophy and urging readers to “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings.” His writings helped bring attention to this region that eventually led to the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1890, and many others to follow. It was for these reasons that the Sierra Club lobbied to name the complete trail after John Muir. The Muir Shelter was strategically located at the apex of the trail to take advantage of the spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and overlooks of the John Muir Wilderness, representing one of the nation's preeminent cultural/natural landscapes.

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## CRITERIA CONSIDERATION F: Commemorative Properties

The John Muir Memorial Shelter is the only building conceived and erected by the Sierra Club to honor its first President and co-founder, John Muir. Likewise, the strategic setting at the apex of Muir Pass was intentional: to place the memorial at the proximate midpoint of the John Muir Trail in honor of Muir's contributions to the Sierra Nevada's wilderness conservation movement. In addition to Muir's role in founding the Sierra Club, his extensive writings on topics of conservation and wilderness, such as *Our National Parks*, helped bring attention to this region that eventually led to the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1890. Muir's work ultimately laid the groundwork for the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916. It was for these reasons that the Sierra Club lobbied to name the complete trail after John Muir.

The Muir Shelter is one of only two memorial buildings constructed by the Club. The other is the LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite, built for Joseph LeConte, a geologist and early Sierra Club director who worked with Muir to explore and protect Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada, and was the first to support Muir's theory of glacial formation. The LeConte Lodge, along with the Parsons Memorial Lodge and the Ranger's Club are also among those park structures influenced by the Bay Area style. LeConte Lodge has already been designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) for its architectural significance. The LeConte Lodge together with the John Muir Memorial Shelter mark the two parks that bookend the John Muir Trail: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and Yosemite National Park.

Leaders of the Sierra Club dedicated the memorial shelter in July 1933, during a boisterous ceremony that included speeches and musical performances, held during the club's annual high country trip. Sixty hikers, all participants in the Sierra Club's annual High Trip, congregated at the Muir Pass for the ceremony. A bronze plaque, inscribed "To John Muir, Lover of the Range of Light," was installed next to the entrance. Comments were delivered by Sierra Club Secretary William E. Colby and Club President Francis Farquhar. Colby's accomplishment is remarkable in light of its 1930 year of construction, coinciding with the beginning of the Great Depression. After the ceremony, photographer Ansel Adams recorded two large-format portraits of William Colby, the Sierra Club High Trip's Leader, standing in the entry of the memorial shelter. In recalling the event for the *Sierra Club Bulletin* of June 1934, Colby wrote, "The hardest work of the outing was the long pull up to the pass in time for the service toward which our minds had been turning for several months. Emerging breathlessly upon the 12,000 foot summit, we became aware of a small beehive-shaped structure which fitted in harmoniously, both in color and in design, with the gray landscape. Constructed of flat stones, it has been so sturdily built that like its prototypes in southern Italy, it should withstand the storms of many centuries."

The landmark memorial shelter has come to symbolize Muir's enduring sauntering spirit, (Latin to "*follow the saints' trail*"). "Saunterers" was Muir's preferred descriptive for those wanderings, like himself, who felt compelled to make the pilgrimage to the high holy land of the Sierra Nevada crest. The Muir Memorial Shelter, situated at Muir Pass, at the proximate midpoint of the John Muir Trail, signifies to every saunterer that he or she has arrived at an extraordinary place along their journey. According to one hiker who came upon the Muir



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Memorial Shelter, “No city home, with all its comforts and conveniences, is more appreciated by a storm-bound hiker or an exhausted mountaineer than this bleak, one room stone hut – a beehive shaped structure (designed from similar shelters in Southern Italy) which merges perfectly into its wilderness setting.”<sup>2</sup> The Muir Shelter remains the one and only architectural feature of this highly important cultural/natural landscape, the John Muir Trail. Its significance is integrally tied to its setting, its architecture, and to its cultural impact and association with John Muir and the Sierra Club and their seminal role in the conservation and enjoyment of national parks and wilderness areas. As a commemorative property with significance under Criteria A and C independent of its memorial association, the shelter satisfies Criteria Consideration F.

### **Period of Historic Significance**

The period of historic significance for the John Muir Memorial Shelter is 1930 to 1966. The initial vision to erect the Muir Memorial Shelter in the Trullo hut architectural style was conceived by Sierra Club Secretary William Colby in February, 1930; translated into construction documents by architect Henry Gutterson by May, 1930 and constructed by a U.S. Forest Service masonry crew during the summer of 1930. The building was formally dedicated by sixty leaders of the Sierra Club organization in late July 1933, with the fixing of the bronze plaque commemorating Muir. The plaque’s first line reads, “To John Muir, Lover of the Range of Light....” Photographer Ansel Adams participated in the dedication ceremony and also recorded several portraits during the event. The shelter continues to garner historic significance as a regularly visited commemorative memorial. The period of its historic significance carries up to 1966, which is the current fifty year threshold year for obtaining historic status on the National Register.

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<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, Sierra Club High Trip Notes, Summer, 1954 Sierra Club High Trip Photo Album, Archives of the William E. Colby Memorial Library, Sierra Club Headquarters, San Francisco.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Allen, Edward. "Of Dry Stone: Alberobello." In *Stone Shelters*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969.

Browning, Peter. *Place Names of the Sierra Nevada*. Berkeley: Wilderness Press, 1986.

Boulware, Ethel. "Afoot With the Sierra Club in 1933." *Sierra Club Bulletin*, June 1934.

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Mehls, Steven F. "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Agnes Vaille Shelter" <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Tesxt/92001669.pdf> National Park Service. Retrieved 24 August 2014.

National Park Service. "Individual Building Data for the Shelter Cabin at Muir Pass." NPS Form, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, July 26, 1969.

Roth, Hal. *Pathway in the Sky; the Story of the John Muir Trail*. Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1965.

Sierra Club Committee Records. Series 7, Container 39, Folder 35: "Lodges and Lands: Muir Memorial Rest Hut 1930-35." Drawing 1: "Muir Memorial Rest Hut," Henry H. Gutterson, Architect. Drawing 2: "Detail of Roof Construction" Muir Memorial Rest Hut, unsigned. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Wilstach, Paul. "The Stone Beehive Homes of the Italian Heel: In Trulli-Land the Native Builds His Dwelling and Makes His Field Arable in the Same Operation." *National Geographic*, February 1930, 228-260.

Winter, Robert. *Towards a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts and Crafts Architects of California*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: UC Berkeley Bancroft Library, Berkeley; William E. Colby Memorial Library, Sierra Club Headquarters, San Francisco

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** ~320 acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.111600 | Longitude: -118.670660  |
| 2. Latitude: 37.110114 | Longitude: - 118.670926 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.118301 | Longitude: - 118.685849 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.120559 | Longitude: - 118.682088 |

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- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5. Latitude: 37.113707 | Longitude: - 118.669602 |
| 6. Latitude: 37.120872 | Longitude: - 118.660840 |
| 7. Latitude: 37.119514 | Longitude: - 118.655786 |
| 8. Latitude: 37.111704 | Longitude: - 118.662632 |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The first Latitude/Longitude coordinate noted above is for the center of the John Muir Memorial Shelter itself. The property boundary for the area around the John Muir Memorial Shelter is a polygon measuring approximately one quarter mile wide by two miles long, with the shelter positioned in the center point of the polygon. The two mile long linear dimension follows the bent axis of the John Muir Trail as it extends away from Muir Pass, one mile to the north and one mile to the south. The point of origin is 0.25 mile directly south of the trail at the John Muir Memorial Shelter (Latitude/Longitude Coordinate No. 2 above). Moving in a clockwise direction head a distance of 1 mile at 305 degrees NW to the edge of Wanda Lake (Coordinate No. 3); then head a distance of 0.25 mile at 54 degrees NE to the edge of Lake McDermard (Coordinate No. 4); then head 0.84 mile at 125 degrees SE to the ridge line (Coordinate No. 5); then head 0.7 mile at 45 degrees NE to the east shore of Helen Lake (Coordinate No. 6); then head 0.3 mile at 109 degrees SSE across the hill top to the stream (Coordinate No. 7); then head 0.65 mile at 216 degrees SW (Coordinate No. 8); then head 0.47 mile at 257 degrees SE back to the point of origin.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary establishes a quarter mile wide zone around the shelter, and recognizes that the backpacker's approach to the shelter on the John Muir Trail from both the north and south is prescribed by the trail's path. The structure's strategic setting at the saddle of Muir Pass was selected after the JMT trail's creation in 1915. As the hiker ascends Muir Pass, there are several distant views of the shelter from the JMT trail that heighten the hiker's anticipation of arrival. This elongated trail-defined boundary recognizes the important JMT viewsheds to and from the John Muir Memorial Shelter.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Douglas Harnsberger, Architectural Historian volunteering for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (supervised by David T. Humphrey, Cultural Resources Program Manager, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks)

organization: Legacy Architecture, LLC

street & number: 227 Park Avenue

city or town: Swarthmore state: PA zip code: 19081

e-mail [dharnsberger@gmail.com](mailto:dharnsberger@gmail.com)

telephone: 804-399-0814 (cell)

date: February 2016; Rev. May 2016; Rev. July 2016

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: John Muir Memorial Shelter

City or Vicinity: Grant Grove (vicinity)

County: Fresno

State: California

Photographer: Douglas Harnsberger

Date Photographed: June 23, 2015, except where otherwise indicated

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

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Black and white exterior images (1-3) are taken from 5x7 large format unaltered negatives, approved by HABS for the Library of Congress collection. Negatives on file at HABS.

- 1 of 18 East front elevation, showing entry
- 2 of 18 South side elevation, showing chimney
- 3 of 18 North side elevation, showing window
- 4 of 18 Commemorative Plaque: "To John Muir, Lover of the Range of Light" installed at the Dedication Ceremony by William Colby, July 30, 1933
- 5 of 18 Granite fireplace and hearth detail
- 6 of 18 Corbelled granite conical ceiling detail
- 7 of 18 NPS Preservation Crew Leader Thor Rikshiem restoring entry door, July 2014
- 8 of 18 Fixed wireglass window pane and viewshed from shelter
- 9 of 18 Perimeter bench seat and stone wall detail
- 10 of 18 Arts and Craft Style hammered entry door pull and latch
- 11 of 18 Viewshed to the Northwest from Muir Pass towards Lake McDermand
- 12 of 18 Viewshed to the Northeast from Muir Pass towards Helan Lake and Mt. Warlow
- 13 of 18 Viewshed to the Northwest to Lake McDermand and Wanda Lake
- 14 of 18 Wanda Lake Landscape, looking Northeast
- 15 of 18 Winter Landscape of the Muir Memorial Shelter at Muir Pass, looking Northwest
- 16 of 18 Northwest approach to Muir Pass on the John Muir Trail
- 17 of 18 Northeastern elevation of Muir Memorial Shelter with Mount Solomons in background
- 18 of 18 East elevation of Muir Memorial Shelter with Lake McDermond to the Northwest.

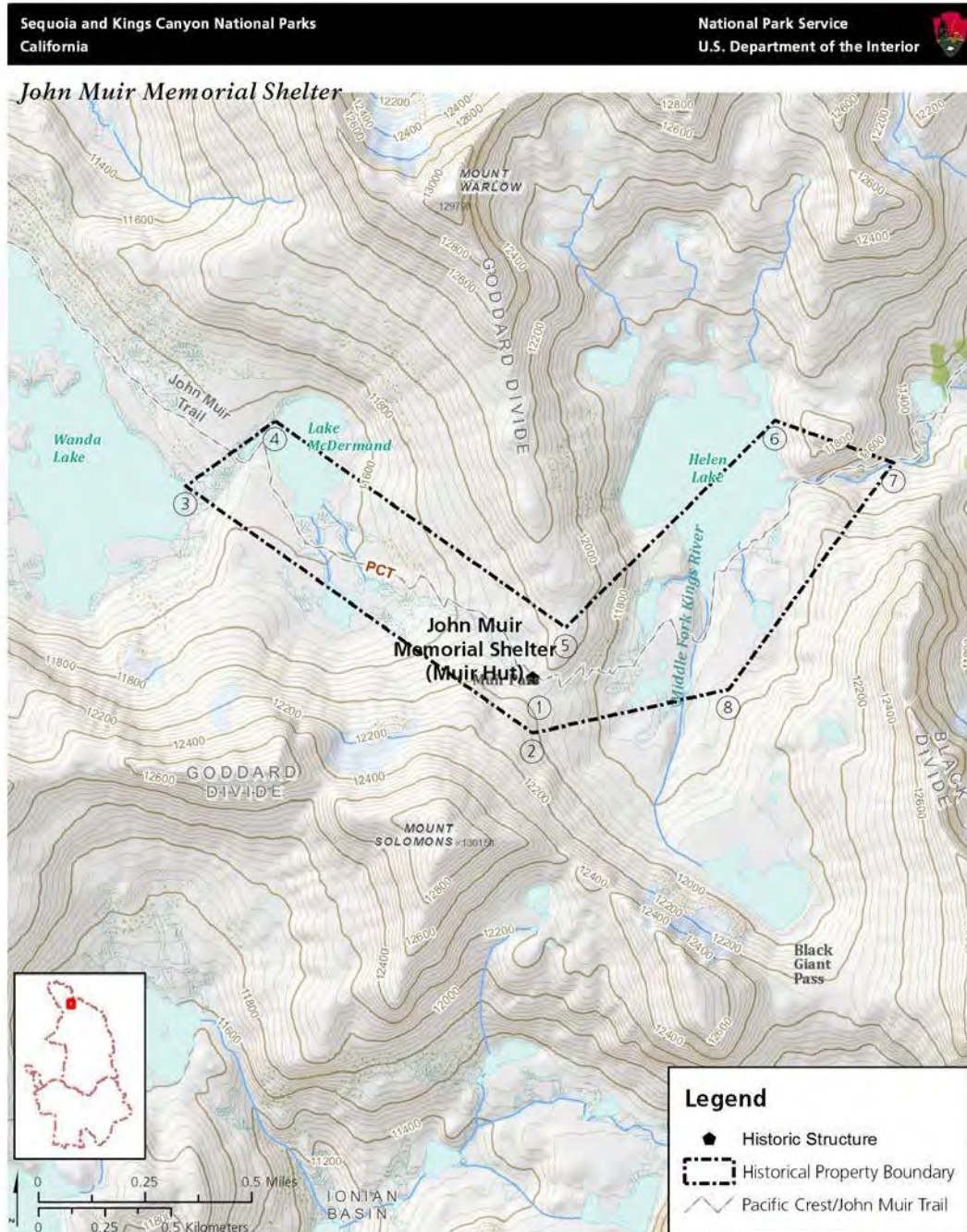
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**Location Map** [Points indicated by ① represent lat/long coordinates identified in Section 10]



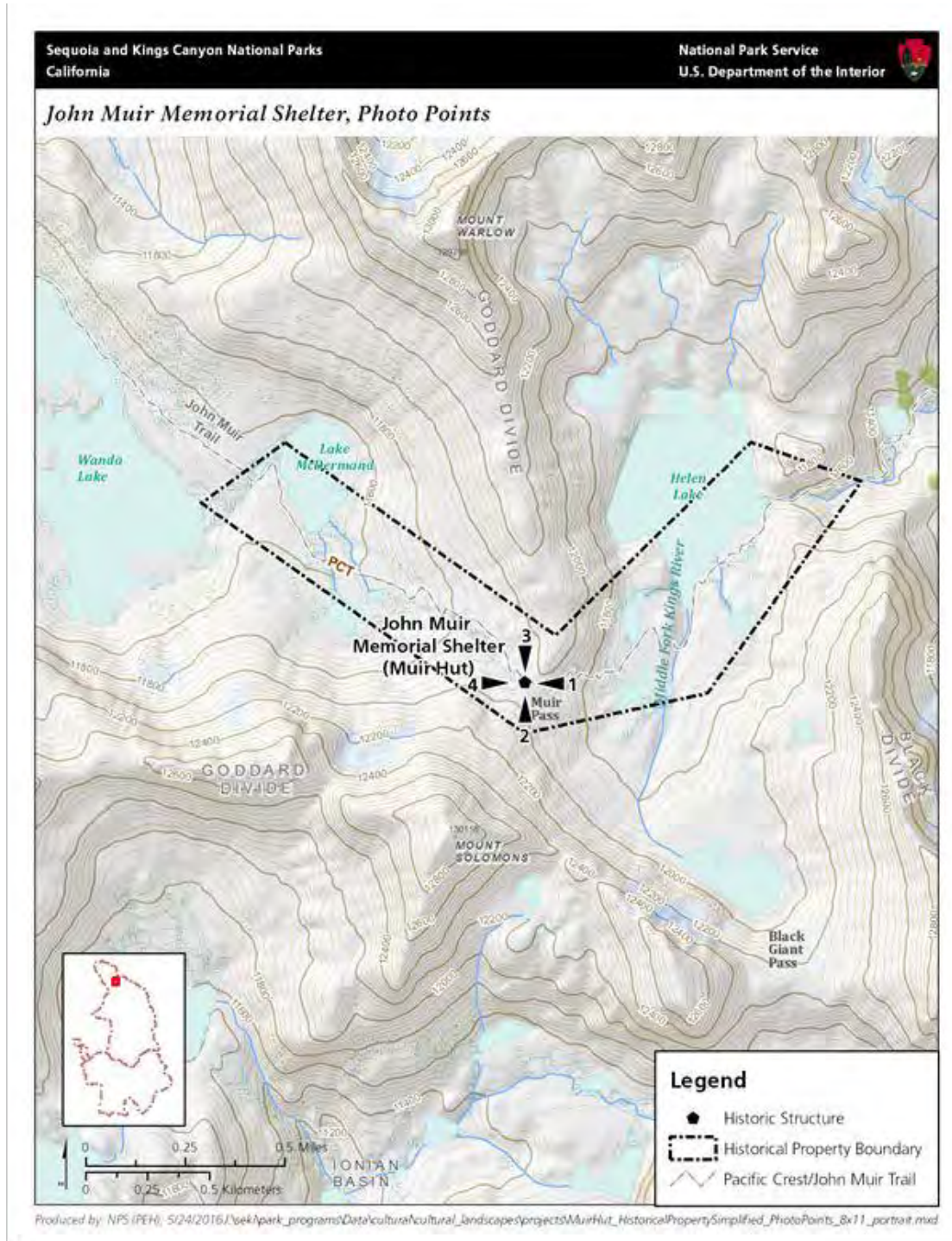
Produced by: NPS (PEH); 5/27/2016

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### Sketch Map/Photo Key

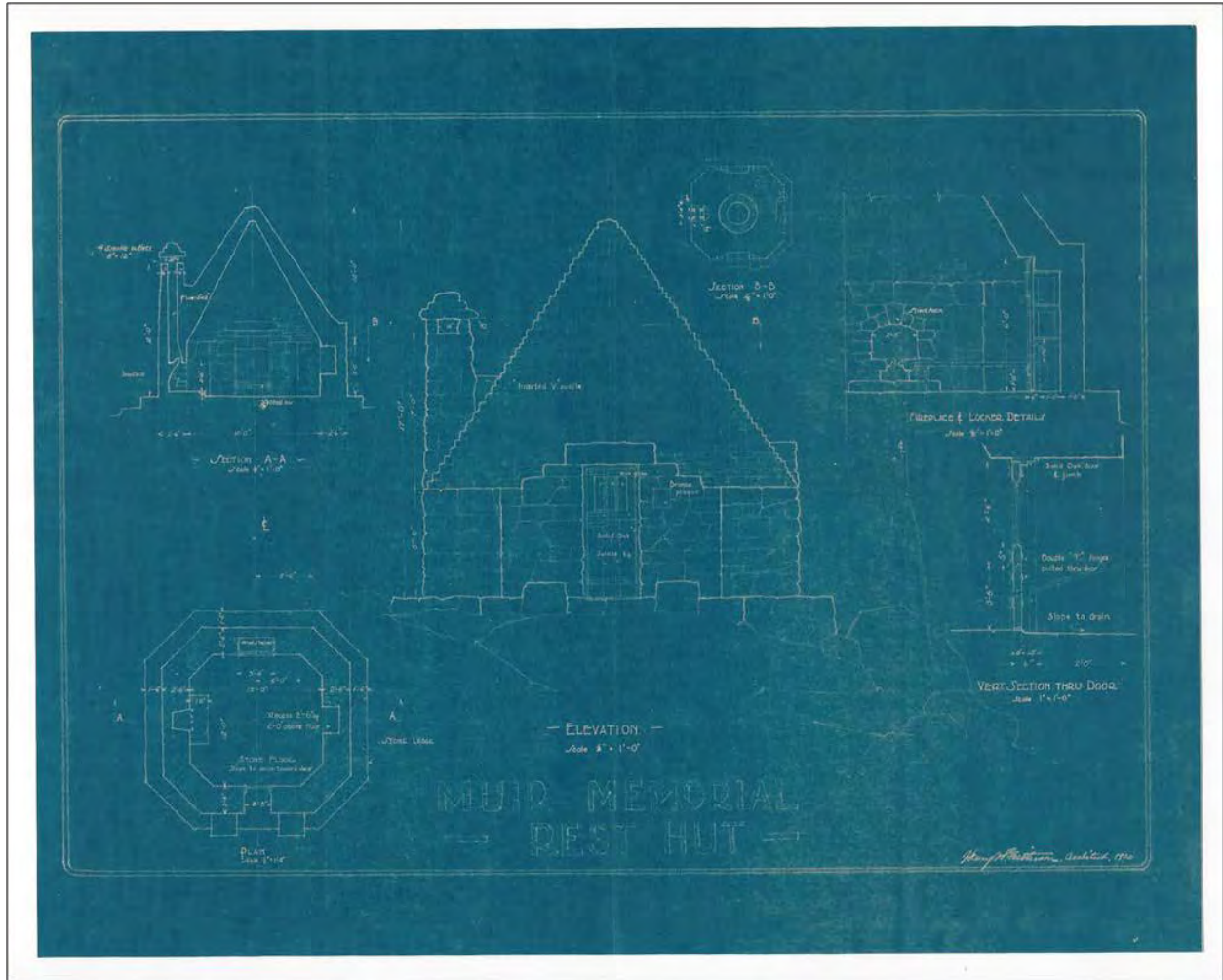




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**Figure 1.** Blueprint drawing by architect Henry Gutterson, March 1930, University of California, Berkeley, Doe Library and Archives.



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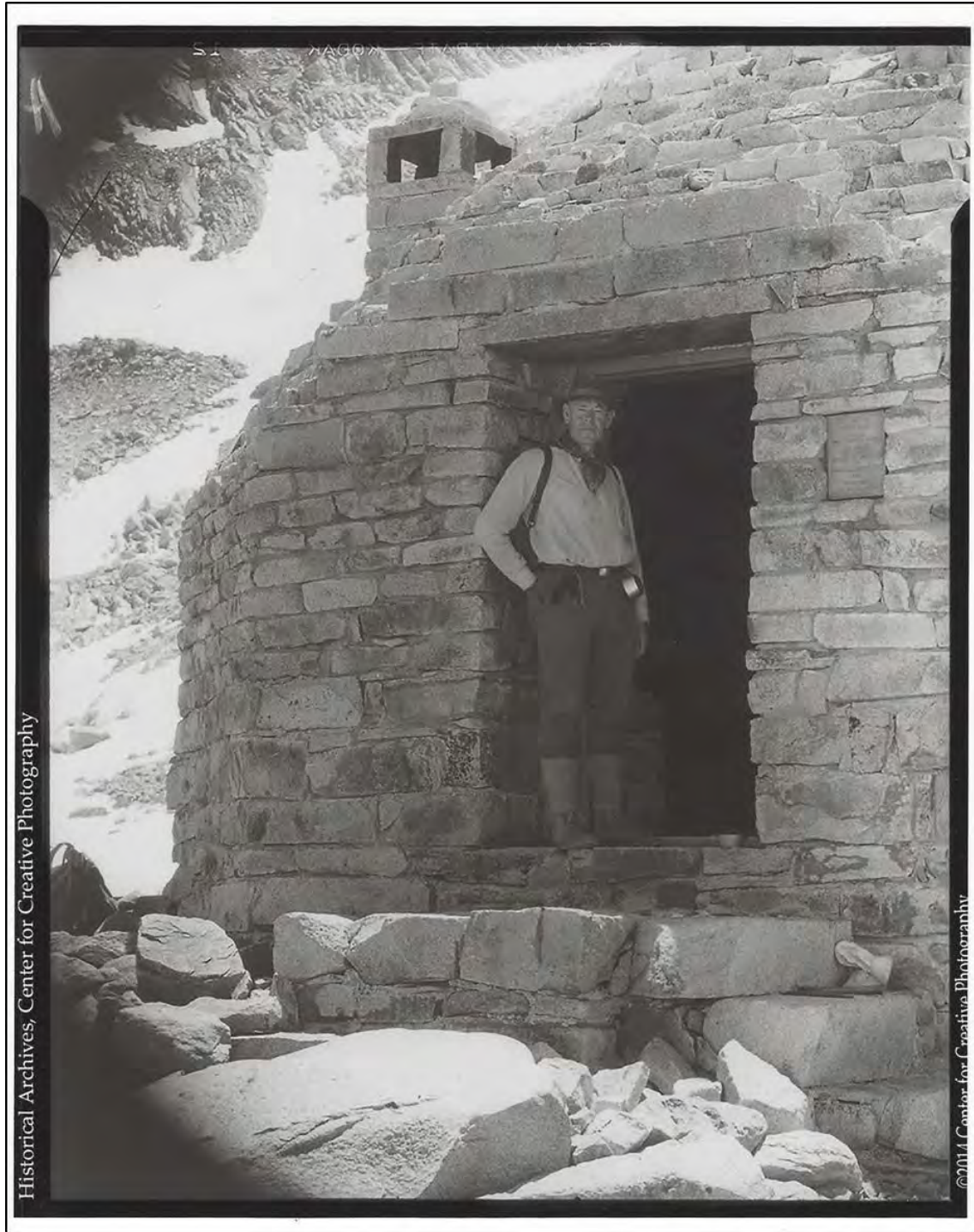
**Figure 2.** Architect's rendering, 1930. Source: *Sierra Club Bulletin*, Vol. XVI.



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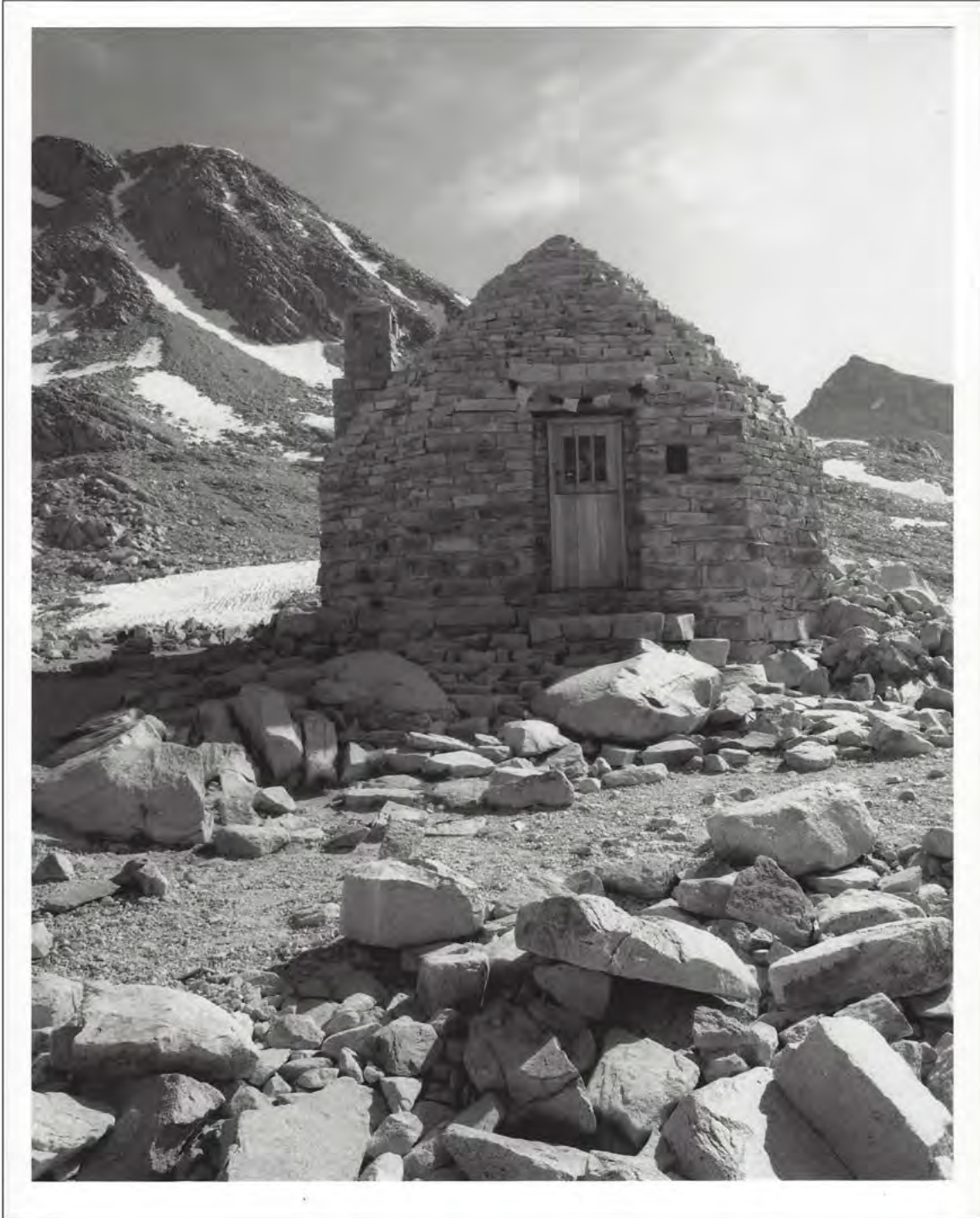
**Figure 3.** Sierra Club Secretary William E. Colby standing in the doorway of recently completed shelter, July, 1933. Photographer unknown. Source: Historical Archives Center for Creative Photography.



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**Photo 1.** East front elevation showing entry, 2015.



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**Photo 2.** South side elevation showing chimney, 2015.



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**Photo 3.** North side elevation showing window, 2015.



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**Photo 4.** Commemorative Plaque: “To John Muir, Lover of the Range of Light” installed at the Dedication Ceremony by William Colby, July 30, 1933, photographed 2015.



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**Photo 5.** Granite fireplace and hearth detail, 2015.





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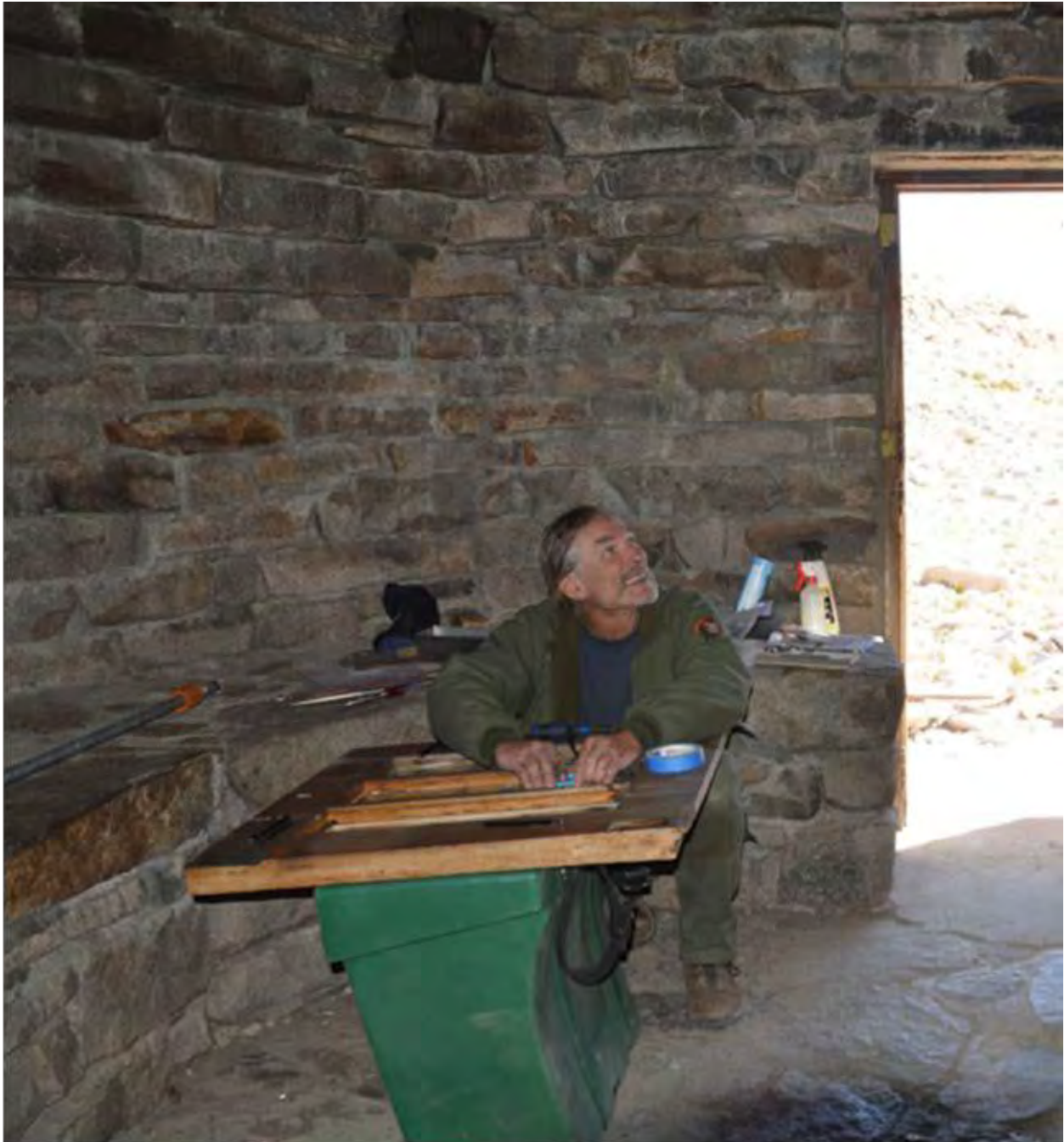
**Photo 6.** Corbelled granite conical ceiling detail, 2015.



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**Photo 7.** NPS Preservation Crew Leader Thor Rikshiem restoring entry door, July 2014.



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**Photo 8.** Fixed wireglass window pane and viewshed from shelter, 2015.



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**Photo 9.** Perimeter bench seat and stone wall detail, 2015.



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**Photo 10.** Arts and Craft Style hammered entry door pull and latch, 2015.











TO  
JOHN MUIR  
LOVER OF  
"THE RANGE OF LIGHT"  
THIS SHELTER  
WAS ERECTED  
THROUGH THE GENEROSITY  
OF  
GEORGE FREDERICK SCHWARZ  
1931  
SIERRA CLUB  
U. S. FOREST SERVICE



1907-1917  
The Sierra Club has been a leading force in the conservation of the natural resources of the United States. It has been instrumental in the establishment of many national parks and monuments, and in the preservation of many of our most beautiful natural areas. The Sierra Club is a national organization of individuals who are interested in the conservation of our natural resources and who are working to protect them.



SIERRA CLUB



























