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John Muir in Yosemite in 1908

JOHN MUIR NUMBER

Commemorating the Hundredth
Anniversary of His Birth - April 21.

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John Muir in Yosemite

By C. A. Harwell, Park Naturalist

Seventy years ago this month John Muir made his first visit to Yosemite. He walked all the way from San Francisco with a fellow steerage passenger, Chilwell, whom he had met on the boat up from Panama. Together they made their way to the Valley long before the trails were opened that year for tourist travel. The two crude hotels of the time in the Valley, Hutchings and The Lower House, were closed for the winter but that did not matter to Muir; they must make three dollars apiece last for a month of pure reveling in nature. After two weeks in and around the Valley they took the trail to Clark's Station at Wawona and on to the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees. Their funds depleted the two walked out to the foothill ranch country to find work. Muir pitched hay, broke horses and then spent the fall and winter herding sheep for "Smoky Jack" Connel near Snelling.

Next spring he was hired by Pat Delaney to take a band of sheep to high green pastures around Delaney Creek in Tuolumne Meadows. While an assistant and two dogs tended the flocks Muir 'climbed the mountains and got their good tidings.'

That fall he felt done with sheep. Rich in money, health and time he walked again into the mountains in November intending to explore the Hetch Hetchy Valley or perhaps the Kings River country. His companion was Harry Randall of Rhode Island. A week's travel brought the two to Yosemite Valley and to the attention of J. M. Hutchings, who in 1864 bought the Upper Hotel, preempted 160 acres of land and established his home and orchards on Yosemite Creek. In 1869, he persuaded the Commissioners a sawmill should be built to provide needed lumber from trees recently blown down during heavy storms. Muir, the inventor, was engaged to build and operate the mill. He was to board with the Hutching's family. Muir built himself a shake cabin on the banks of Yosemite Creek between the mill and the Hutching's house and lived there two years, while working for Hutchings.

The mill site is now just a deep hole in the bank of Yosemite Creek, though the mill-race is still plainly seen. The Hutching's house has been entirely removed but the orchard still bears good crops of fruit.

The location of Muir's cabin has not been definitely determined. A tablet marking the spot selected by a committee was placed by the California Conference of Social Work in 1924. It does not seem probable that the three dollar cabin would have been built so deep in the woods and with two branches of Yosemite Creek to cross to reach it from the mill or house. I believe I have located the true spot on the bank of the most easterly branch of the creek, facing an open meadow. I showed this find to Dr. W. F. Bade in 1934. He agreed this site was very plausible. Foundation trenches are present; there is evidence of a change in the stream channel to make a portion of it flow under a corner of the cabin and it tallies with Muir's sketches.



Painting of Sawmill by Mrs. Hutchings

His contract terminated and his cabin taken over by Hutchings, Muir moved to Black's Hotel, under Sentinel Rock, September 1871 to serve as care-taker for the winter. It was here he observed the Inyo

earthquake of March 26, 1872, and the crash of "Eagle Rock" to the Valley floor.

During the spring and summer of 1872 Muir built a second Yosemite home under the Royal Arches. This log cabin he seems to have occupied but little after 1874. No vestige of it now remains.

Muir was a naturalist by inclination and training. He would have become great had he never visited Yosemite. But here he found challenging work that gave his life definite purpose. He was the first to advocate the glacial erosion theory for the formation of Yosemite Valley. J. D. Whitney, State Geologist for California, believed that the bottom had fallen out of the Valley and these cliffs were on faulty cracks. Muir laughed at this belief and said that "No bottom ever fell out of anything God made." To support his contention he undertook single-handed the tremendous task of carefully exploring every canyon, ridge and peak of this region to determine underlying causes of origin.

The results of these strenuous years of exploration added much to our knowledge of the geology of the region as well as to all phases of natural history. His published journals, magazine articles and books resulting are distinct contributions to literature.

There are, however, larger and more far-reaching results of his labors in Yosemite. Convinced by experience and observation that the grazing of sheep and cattle over the mountains was ruining the natural cover and that lumbering was lay-

By waste some of the grandest forests on earth he turned militant conservationist and preached 'forest good' by every means at his command. Soon recognized as a champion he became much in demand. Leaders of the time sought him out. Emerson, Stoddard, Le Conte, Agassiz, Asa Gray, Hooker, Runkle, Robert Underwood Johnson and many others in the field of science, literature and art beat a path to his door. He was compelled to write and lecture.

Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of the Century Magazine entered into a compact with John Muir beside a campfire a summer night, 1889, up in Tuolumne Meadows. Muir was to work out boundaries for a great Yosemite National Park of some fifteen hundred square miles, to surround the Yosemite operated as a trust by the State, and to write a series of articles for the Century to enlist public support, while Johnson was to draft a bill. The idea prevailed, the bill was passed by Congress and October 1, 1890 Yosemite National Park was created. Under the same impetus Sequoia and General Grant National Parks were set aside and in addition some 13,000,000 acres of forest reserves were withdrawn from entry and added to our National Forests.

Muir could not rest. These areas needed protection against despoiling influences; they needed policies of management. His remaining days must be committed to the task. With others he organized the Sierra Club of California in 1892 and served as its president until his death in 1914.

This club has exerted strong and helpful influence on Yosemite and all National and State Parks in California.

In 1903 Muir received his most distinguished visitor in Yosemite. President Theodore Roosevelt deserted his party including Private Secretary Loeb, Governor George C. Pardee and Benjamin Ide Wheeler, at Wawona in order to spend two days and three nights roughing it with John Muir. This had been arranged before the President left Washington. May 15 they camped in Mariposa Grove; May 16 they rode horses by way of Crescent Lake to Sentinel Dome where they camped in a snow storm; May 17 they visited Glacier Point then took the Eleven-mile Trail to the Valley and camped for the night under Bridalveil Fall. Oldtimers here still talk about the great banquet planned at the Sentinel Hotel, the five hundred dollars worth of fireworks purchased and their disappointment that the President preferred to stay out with this mountaineer rather than celebrate with them. Viewed in the large the President chose well. Muir knew much that Roosevelt enjoyed discussing with him, but more important, Muir had strong convictions on the subject of preserving unspoiled nature and definite areas to propose and definite suggestions regarding the necessary legislation involved. In particular he urged the setting aside of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado and the Petrified Forests of Arizona.

Returning to Washington, President Roosevelt launched an aggress-

ive conservation policy. During the next five years he created five National Parks, sixteen National Monuments and added 148,000,000 acres to our National Forest preserves.

The National Park Service and

Yosemite in particular owe much to John Muir. The significance of his contribution is looming larger as time passes. This year his hundredth anniversary is being celebrated in all our parks and monuments.

WITH MUIR IN YOSEMITE

Robert Underwood Johnson

Great Nature has her times of dominance

When men seem pigmies and she cries aloud—

"Play at your love and lordly circumstance;

You have but little leisure to be proud,

Your life is but a passing hour bequiled

A trivial game that might amuse a child.

I am immortal. Every stream that flows

To gladden sorrow or to lessen pain

Is but the harvest of perpetual snows

That mock at striving with a cold disdain.

And while your wounding toil in me seeks balm

I from my heights look down on you in calm.

But I have been your friend and still shall be—

Your playmate, nurse, companion of your grief;

E'en to the portal of Eternity,

My breast shall give your restlessness relief.

You count yourselves as free—I know you slaves,

And watch the generations make their graves."

These words I heard above Yosemite,

Camping beneath large stars with that rare soul—

Him of the glacier and the mammoth tree,

Who followed Nature to her shyest goal,

He heard her solemn message in the night,

Nor ever failed to read its tune aright.

Yet, knowing many a secret of her keep

He was not overawed by what he learned;

Noting the flower bloom the glacier creep,

In each a thought of God by him discerned.

He found no accident in Nature's plan

But all created for the good of man.

Ere dawn had kissed the level valley floor
He climbed to summits through the sleeping wood
By the inerrant guide of forest lore,
And found companionship in solitude.
He feared no beast and by no beast was feared
And none was startled when his shape appeared.

With him I mounted the high precipice—
Halfway to Heaven it seemed—his open book.
His hail was cheer that not a June would miss;
None but the Baptist had so rapt a "look."
But tears were in his voice when he deplored
That lofty waterfalls no longer roared.

For here was havoc of the woodland roof
Its mountain meadows were but barren sod
The innocent flocks had murdered with the hoof,
—And man had minimized the work of God.
The wintry snows that fed the summer streams
Too early felt the sun's dissolving beams.

There, by the campfire of Tuolumne—
The hour when hearts reveal their inmost hoard,—
We planned the rescue that was soon to be,
Shouting again the glory of the Lord.
How did his reverent memory rejoice
To hear once more the water's joyful voice!

And so by him, or haply, in his name,
Were saved a hundred treasures of the wild.
Alas! that one, the Valley of Our Shame,
By man should be dishonored and defiled,
When beauty was bedraggled in the mart
He sought the wilderness—a broken heart!

In high Sierra should his dust repose,
For there his spirit lives, great Nature's priest,
In pity not in scorn he wept her foes
A crumb of beauty was to him a feast.
He gave her sacrament to all who came
Sight to the blind and vigor to the lame.

Pilgrims of mind and heart who humbly come
To worship at this holy shrine of God;
Something there is than all of Nature's sun
More worth, more permanent than peak or sod
Seek ye the great of soul? Ye shall not find
A nobler cynosure of humankind.

John Muir

By Mrs. H. J. Taylor

April 21, 1938 is the centenary of John Muir—conservationist and lover of nature—who was born in Dunbar, Scotland. Through serious handicaps and seemingly insurmountable obstacles he realized his longing for an education and attained great heights. As a conservationist he has few equals. As an interpreter of nature he stands above the timber-line and alone. His magnetic pen, in classic literature, has bequeathed to the world and to time rare descriptions and interpretations of nature in her varied moods and forms. His writing, simple and wholesome, has an indescribable charm and an atmosphere that comes from nature herself. Through it all runs a philosophy that is contagious and life giving.

At the age of eleven he emigrated to America with his father, his brother David aged nine, and his sister Sarah aged thirteen. Margaret, aged fifteen, and the three youngest children remained in Scotland with the mother until a home in America should be provided for them.

The Muirs took up land north east of Lake Mendota at Fountain Lake not far from Portage, Wisconsin. The logs having been prepared a little shanty was built in less than a day. This provided shelter and a sleeping place until a more comfortable house became possible.

Muir's school days began before he was four years old and continued until he emigrated to America in 1849. He had three lessons daily in

French, Latin, and English. For anything less than a perfect lesson a vigorous thrashing was at once administered. Muir says: "With much warlike thrashing I committed the whole of the French, Latin, and English grammars to memory." In addition to his work at school his father required him to memorize a fixed number of Bible verses daily. Muir says: "When I was eleven years of age I had committed about three fourths of the Old Testament and all of the New by heart and by sore flesh." At that time the whipping lash and the hickory stick were much in use both at home and at school. Beating the skin to the bruised and bleeding stage may have secured much memorizing but it availed little in deterring youths from running away to roam the woods and meadows where birds sang and flowers bloomed. The buoyancy of youth is not easily daunted. Imagination and day dreams carry far. A thrashing is a mere pittance to pay for freedom and glorious adventure.

In America the unchanging progress was hard at work from day-break until dark. Muir's school days ended in Scotland but not his education. Out of the night he took a few hours for reading and for working on his inventions. So much did the farm work need him that John remained at home two years after he was of age but the light within him burned ever brighter and his longing for an education became compelling. With deep feeling he said good bye to his

home and family and set out for the University of Wisconsin not many miles away. His assets were fifteen dollars in money, a clear vision of what he wanted to do, and perseverance and determination to do it. He called on Professor Sterling, then Acting President of the University, and told him that farm work had been so much and so urgent that he had attended school but two months in the twelve years he had been in America. He also told him that he had read nights. He rehearsed the studies he had taken in Scotland. Professor Sterling understood this shy, reticent youth and realized his yearning for an education. In the autumn of 1861 John Muir was enrolled in the University of Wisconsin.

His dream of the university course came true at last. Four years of freedom to study, to roam the fields and meadows, to burn the midnight oil at will—this was joy unbounded. His summers were spent in the harvest field earning money to pay college expenses. His physical strength and skill made it possible for him to cradle four acres of grain a day and to put it into shocks. After four years as a special student John Muir left the university and went forth to study nature in rocks and roaring cataracts; in flowering meadows and mountain peaks; in forests where stately trees bowed to winds and storms.

An injury to his eye lessened his sight but not his art of seeing. Always a keen observer and student he traveled over the earth and loved it all. The Sierra, "Mountains of Light," were to him a lodestone. Wherever

he wandered they called and he returned with joy to their magnificent forests, to him the grandest on all the earth. For eleven years he had gone into the Sierra from his cabin in Yosemite returning when snows and storms of winter compelled. It was on these wandering that he observed the destruction wrought by grazing sheep and lumber logging. A few brief years were destroying what through many centuries Nature had wrought and the heart and the brain of the conservationist were aroused to action.



Notebook Sketch by John Muir

Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of the Century, came into Yosemite and wished to see the flowering meadows so graphically described by Muir in his articles published in the Century. Muir took him into the mountains and showed him the wastes that had recently been mountain gardens and the denuded hillsides and mountain slopes, shorn of their shrubs and stately trees, no longer able to retain and hold back

the melting snows and rains. Sitting by the camp fire at Soda Springs in Tuolumne Meadows these two conservationists talked through the night of ways and means to preserve for future generations the values of nature. At Johnson's suggestion Muir wrote two articles to be published in the *Century*, the first on "Treasures of Yosemite;" the second on "The Proposed Yosemite National Park" in which he outlined the areas to be included.

When Muir talked of conservation the country listened. On reading his articles it was aroused to preserve and enlarge Yosemite. Underwood Johnson appeared before the House Committee; a bill was drafted on the lines suggested by Muir and on October first, 1890, Yosemite National Park became a reality.

Muir lives increasingly with the years. The Sierra Club, of which John Muir was president from its founding in 1892 until he died on Christmas Eve 1914, has brought joy and recreation to thousands. They walk the trails that Muir walked and the 'breezes have blown their freshness into them.'

The name of Muir can never die. The great glacier in Alaska is Muir Glacier. The beautiful forest of Redwoods given to our country by Senator and Mrs. Kent is Muir Woods. In the High Sierra are Muir Trail, Muir Hut, and Muir Pass. In Yosemite a large boulder marks the spot where stood Muir's cabin. In Wisconsin is Muir Lake. On the campus of the University of Wisconsin is Muir Knoll, so named in memory of one of her greatest sons.

In the hearts of those whose minds are quickened, whose eyes have learned to see, whose understanding is broadened, Muir will live.



A SELF-PORTRAIT
Drawing in letter of February 23, 1887
to Miss Janet Douglass Moores

John Muir

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Dan Anderson