

National Park Service  
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Harpers Ferry Center



# Historic Furnishings Report

John Muir National Historic Site  
Martinez, California

## Strentzel-Muir House



**APPROVED:**

Martha Lee

Superintendent, John Muir National Historic Site

November 15, 2005

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# Historic Furnishings Report

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by Mary Grassick  
*Staff Curator*

Office of Media Development  
Harpers Ferry Center  
National Park Service, 2006

*Cover: Muir Family at home, Martinez, 1902 (figure 3).*

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Mary Grassick  
November 2005





# Administrative Information



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# Administrative Information

## Management Summary

Dr. John T. Strentzel and his wife, Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, moved to Martinez, California, in 1853. Dr. Strentzel practiced medicine, grew fruit commercially, and made wine. The Strentzels' only daughter, Louisiana, married John Muir in 1880 and they all lived together in the Strentzels' ranch house until early 1883, when Dr. and Mrs. Strentzel constructed a new house on the property. At that point, the Strentzels moved into the spacious two-story home that would come to be known as the Strentzel-Muir house. The Muirs remained in the ranch house on the Strentzel property, which was a wedding gift from "Louie's" parents.

After Dr. Strentzel died in 1890, John and Louie Muir and their two small daughters moved into the big house with Mrs. Strentzel. Muir continued to live in the house until his death in December 1914. With the house as his home base and the fruit ranching business providing financial support, Muir traveled the world, worked to organize the Sierra Club, and published important conservation works such as *Our National Parks* and *Yosemite*.

Louie died in 1905 and grown daughters Wanda and Helen lived with Muir at various times before their marriages. Muir made minor renovations to the house after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake shook the Alhambra Valley, and again shortly before his death in 1914.

Helen Muir Funk inherited the house at Muir's death and sold it soon thereafter. The house was owned by various people until the Kriess family acquired it in 1937. They renovated the house, then sold it to Mr.

and Mrs. Henry Sax in 1955. The house remained vacant for nearly a year before the Saxes moved in, and during that time the interior of the house was vandalized. Mr. and Mrs. Sax continued to renovate the house during their tenure. They sold the house to the National Park Service in 1964.

John Muir National Historic Site was established in 1964 by Public Law 88-47. It originally included the Strentzel-Muir House, the Vicente Martinez Adobe – an early Martinez home once occupied by Muir's daughter, Wanda – and nearly nine of the original 2,300 acres of ranch land. The site has been open to the public since 1964. In 1988, the park purchased a tract of land on nearby Mt. Wanda, which was part of the original Muir property, and Muir's gravesite was added to the park.

The Strentzel-Muir house is situated at the top of a rise outside the city of Martinez, in California's Alhambra Valley. The house faces north, towards the city and the Suisun Bay in the distance. Two parlors, a center hall, a dining room, a library, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a servant's bedroom are located on the ground floor, with a glassed-in conservatory and sun porch on the east and west faces of the house.

Muir's well-known Study, or "Scribble Den," is on the second floor, in addition to five bedrooms, a bathroom, a water tank room, and the room he converted to a Study Annex in 1914. A room on the south end of the house was used as a music practice room by Muir's daughters, and is part of the 1890s addition that included the servant's room on the ground floor. See figure 54.

The interpretive period for historic furnishings in the Strentzel-Muir house ranges from 1900 to 1914. The 1996 Interpretive Prospectus (IP) recommends “straddling time periods” at the site in order to thoroughly interpret the house using furnishings. This flexibility in interpretive period allows for furnishings installations to encompass physical changes to the house, as well as to highlight family occupants at different times in their lives.

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The 1996 IP recommends furnishing 12 rooms, with historic furnishings remaining the main interpretive medium used inside the house. Recent park review of primary source furnishings research conducted for this report, however, has led to the decision to fully furnish only four rooms in the house. Although some original Muir furnishings survive and are owned by family members, relatively little information about room arrangement and other furnishings has been located. The only interior photographs of the house are portraits of Muir taken in his Study, although even these do not reveal many details about room furnishings. This Historic Furnishings Report (HFR) recommends fully furnishing Muir’s Study, the Study Annex, Helen’s girlhood Bedroom, and the Kitchen. In the case of the Study, the Annex, and Helen’s Bedroom, written references to the rooms have survived.

The Kitchen will be furnished using comparative evidence such as period illustrations and other printed resources. The park specifically requested that this space be furnished in order to provide access to at least one historically furnished interior for visitors unable to visit the second floor, and to introduce the presence of domestic workers who supported Muir and his family.

The 1996 IP supports the use of historic furnishings only in rooms where documentation is good, stating: “Not all rooms should be furnished or made available for viewing. Each space should pass a strict test of relevance and importance of its contribution to the story.” The IP, however, does not support mixing furnishings with modern interpretive media in an effort to support a “residential” feel to the home; the IP recommends emptying rooms that are not traditionally furnished, rather than mixing media within historic spaces.

Situations change over time. Current research for this report confirms the paucity of evidence about furnishings during the Muir occupation. Recommendations to use exhibits within historic spaces conflict with existing IP recommendations; however, the park has requested funding for a new interpretive framework document called a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP). A new CIP will address these issues and can suggest new directions to explore to improve site interpretation.

The HFR recommends use of traditional exhibits featuring original Muir objects in spaces such as the East and West Parlors, the Dining Room, and selected bedrooms. This report also includes recommendations for wall, floor, lighting, and window treatments throughout the house. These recommendations are based on site-specific evidence where available and on documented period treatments in other cases. Photographic, physical, or written documentation specific to individual rooms is not available for most of the house. The 2003 Historic Structures Report provides additional detail and evidence about historic finishes.

Furnishings originally used in the Strentzel-Muir house have survived, but most are owned by Muir’s descendents. Most of these pieces were documented in the 1971/1982 historic furnishings report. Photographs of existing furnishings are included in this edition of the furnishings report, along with the current locations of family pieces, if known.

### **Interpretive Objectives**

The 1996 Interpretive Prospectus for John Muir NHS establishes interpretive themes and goals for the park. Use of accurate and detailed historic furnishings installations in the house supports the third interpretive theme outlined in the prospectus:

Muir’s Martinez ranch gave him financial independence so he could pursue his interests; his happy home life provided emotional support to counterbalance a life of wandering and struggling in conservation causes.

Muir's furnished Study and Annex illustrate his working habits and show the objects and places he valued. In the Study especially, paintings, photographs, souvenirs and other mementos document stretches of time Muir spent in the wilderness while still maintaining close connections with family, friends, and colleagues. Study furnishings and writing materials such as Muir's desk, books, and stacks of papers show the visitor how Muir worked to bring his understanding and vision of the significance of the wilderness to a wide public.

Helen's furnished bedroom not only introduces Muir's close relationship with his children, but also shows Helen's and Muir's shared interest in the railroad. Interpreters can point out that Muir's interest was more than a hobby; the nearby railroad was vital to the fruit ranching business that supported his family and his advocacy of conservation causes.

The furnished Kitchen also reinforces the importance of Muir's family. Set up to illustrate fruit preserving or preparation of fruit pies, this area emphasizes the lives and activities of other family members in the household, while underlining the importance of the family's fruit crops. Using supplemental media such as an interior wayside or exhibit panel, the furnished Kitchen also introduces the presence of Chinese domestic workers in the Muir home and provides a place for interpreters to point out the significant role domestic workers played in supporting the household.

All four rooms recommended for historic furnishings support the first interpretive objective laid out in the Interpretive Prospectus:

Understand the circumstances and experiences that helped to shape a major American figure in conservation.

Through a combination of furnished rooms, traditional exhibits, interior waysides, and guided and self-guided tours, visitors should come away with a greater understanding of the home life that supported and encouraged Muir's significant contributions to public understanding and support of conservation

ethics in America and the subsequent preservation of cherished wilderness areas.

### **Operating Plan**

John Muir NHS is open to the public Wednesdays through Sundays throughout the year from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. One of the park's stated goals is to establish frequently scheduled guided tours for small groups, although current staffing does not allow the park to provide for guided tours for all visitors.

Visitors currently move through the ground floor of the house in a circular pathway beginning in the West Parlor, moving through the west side of the house to the Kitchen, then through the Kitchen and on to the Dining Room and the East Parlor. They visit the second floor at their own pace, viewing the Bedrooms and Study in no particular order. See figure 54.

This report recommends a mix of historic furnishings and traditional exhibits, and visitors could continue to move freely between rooms according to this plan. Guided tours are preferable with this arrangement as well, but self-guided tours are an option during the interim.

In any historically furnished space security of objects on exhibit is paramount. The north end of Muir's Study on the second floor is protected by a barrier which the plan recommends replacing with a more streamlined and clearly modern version. The Study Annex will contain reproduction objects only – mainly crates and bookshelves – and will not require barriers.

Helen's Room will be viewed over a barrier installed in the doorway and objects within the room will be placed so as to be out of reach of visitors. The Kitchen currently has no barriers, except in the pantry in the southwest corner. It is recommended that this barrier be removed and a barrier of a less obtrusive design be installed to protect the reproduction items to be installed on the pantry shelves.

Park staff request that, with the exception of the pantry, no barriers be installed in the Kitchen after furnishings are installed in this room. Barriers would

prevent access to a lift outside the southeast door to the Kitchen and would interfere with the fire exit from the second floor. After complete historic furnishings are installed in the Kitchen, park staff can assess whether loss or damage to furnishings warrants a reconsideration of this decision.

### **Prior Planning Documents**

The following planning documents affect the use and management of the Strentzel-Muir House, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California:

*Cultural Landscape Report, John Muir National Historic Site* (2005)

*Historic Structure Report, John Muir House, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California, Draft, Phase 1 of 3, Interior Finishes Analysis Report* (March 2003)<sup>1</sup>

*Interpretive Prospectus, John Muir National Historic Site, California* (February 1996)

*Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California* (February 1971, revised 1982)

1 The draft report was published as *John Muir House, Martinez, California, Historic Structure Report*, by Architectural Resources Group, June 2005 (3 volumes).

# Historical Information





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# History of the Structure

*The following information is quoted directly from the 1971/1982 Historic Furnishings Report, prepared by Sally Johnson Ketcham under contract to the National Park Service. Text from the 1971–1982 HFR is boxed. New material appears in brackets and sans serif boldface within the box.*

## Construction of the New House

Shortly after Louie’s marriage, the Strentzels, possibly fulfilling a lifetime dream, began to build a new home on that portion of the ranch that was known as the “old Redfern ranch.”<sup>2</sup> Having been flooded out twice in the gold fields, Dr. Strentzel took care that both his first house and the new house were built on hills secure from high water.

In May 1882, a well was dug at the site selected for the house, and in June, carpenters gathered to begin work. Completing the foundations on July 10, they had the frame up by July 26. Work advanced steadily and by the middle of August the chimneys were finished and the plumbing installed.<sup>3</sup> Notice of the construction of the new residence appeared several times in the weekly paper:

Dr. Strentzel intends to have erected a handsome and costly residence on that portion of his farm known as the old Redfern ranch. A large part of the tract, which is beautifully situated is covered with a young and flourishing orchard and vineyard, and within a few years it will be one of the most attractive places in the country.<sup>4</sup>

By September, the house was “beginning to assume a handsome appearance,” and a large and commodious barn was being erected nearby.<sup>5</sup> The new house received further attention from the press in October and rated a lengthy description.

The new house in process of completion for Dr. John Strentzel, about two miles south of Martinez, is well comported in plan, proportion, style and situation, with the financial resources, esthetic rural tastes, and social position and obligations of the owner. The site is a well chosen one, elevated some thirty feet above the valley level, which fronts and flanks it on either side, and it commands an outlook Northward, between the hill ranges that bound our valley on the East and West, which takes in a section of Carquinez Straits, Benicia, and the rising mountains

2 *Contra Costa Gazette*, July 1, 1882. In her diary, Mrs. Strentzel also referred to it as the Franklin place.

3 John E. Jensen and A. Lewis Koue, *Historic Structure Report, Part II, John Muir House, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California* (National Park Service, June 1968), 2.

4 *Contra Costa Gazette*, July 1, 1882.

5 *Ibid.*, September 2, 1882.

beyond, towards the Coast Range, Sierra Nevada and Cascade Summits. The immediate front and left flanks of the mansion site elevation is covered by a thrifty vineyard and well planted young orchard of choice fruits, and the situation will be a very charming one indeed when the elevation is embellished with its shrubberies, plots, terraces, winding roadways, and walks, with a half acre fish pond as its base to mirror its beauties.

The main body of the house is thirty-eight by forty feet upon the ground, with two full stories and a lofty attic, crowned with an ornate cupola of corresponding style with the building, from which a view may be had at an altitude of full one hundred feet above the valley level. The brick foundation wall of the house incloses [*sic*] a cellar of its full size, seven feet high, with lath and plastered ceiling. The L portion of the building, 22 x 24 feet, is of two stories and attic, and contains the kitchen, servants rooms, water tanks, of which there are two, laboratory and other offices; and the house contains in all some sixteen or seventeen rooms, exclusive of closets and bath rooms, with which it is well provided. It is also piped for gas (should its use ever be desired), hot and cold water, and provided with speaking tubes and electric bell signal wires. All the closets are arranged for free ventilation, and in other features the latest conveniences and improvements are applied to the building, and among these may be mentioned the box cased windows, by which construction the sashes may be thrown up to leave the way clear without stooping from the rooms to the verandas and balconies, and the counterpoise weights are hung with strongly linked copper chain which run smoothly in a flat grooved pulley, without tendency to twist or to wear out in a dozen generations.<sup>6</sup>

The architects of the house were Wolfe & Son of San Francisco, while Sylvester and Langabee, also of San Francisco, were the contractors. The plans followed closely those that appeared in *The California Architect and Building News* for 1882.<sup>7</sup> The *Contra Costa Gazette* allowed that only the best materials and workmanship went into the house, and with but one or two exceptions it would be the finest and most complete private residence in the county.<sup>8</sup>

Special pains were taken to assure an adequate supply of water. Besides a rain water tank in the attic of the L, the house had a 13,000-gallon brick rain water cistern and a supply of fine water from a well pumped by a windmill into the second story tank of the L.<sup>9</sup>

The house was completed in February 1883, although the Strentzels may have moved into it somewhat earlier. The handsome structure represented the style favored in the late Victorian period. It was painted light grey and the porch ceilings were a deep sky blue.<sup>10</sup> At the peak of the roof there was a cupola from which hung a bell used to summon the ranch hands. The hospitable Strentzels planned a house suitable for their own and for their guests' needs. The large formal parlor contained a white onyx fireplace mantel, above which hung a large mirror reflecting the handsome furnishings, gold leaf cornices, and chandelier.

6 Ibid., October 28, 1882.

7 *Historic Structure Report, Part II*, Appendix E.

8 *Contra Costa Gazette*, October 28, 1882.

9 Ibid.

10 *Historic Structure Report, Part II*, 3; and Memorandum to [NPS] Regional Director, Western Region, May 12, 1969.

Adjacent to this room was Dr. Strentzel's library, paneled in redwood, light sapwood, and dark heartwood. Here, in keeping with the darker walls, the fireplace mantel was a mottled brown marble. A doorway led from the library onto a porch (one of five in the house), which was enclosed partially and used by Dr. Strentzel as a medical office.<sup>11</sup>

On the opposite (east) side of the large center hallway was the family parlor and the dining room. Between the parlor and the dining room, there was a bathroom or powder room. Utilizing the windows in the dining room as a doorway, access was gained to an east porch that was used as a conservatory.<sup>12</sup> To the rear was the kitchen, a bathroom, and a west porch enclosed with lattice-work. On the second floor there were seven bedrooms and one bath, with space for two more bathrooms.<sup>13</sup> A feature of three of the bedrooms was a marble lavatory in a corner niche of each room.<sup>14</sup> A large basement, attic, and the cupola completed the house.

The house occupied a commanding position on top of a knoll, with a distant view in all directions. A carriage road wound up the hill to a circle which approached the front of the house to within about thirty feet. As time progressed, the area around the house was landscaped. The front entrance was flanked by two California fan palms. John Muir brought many trees to plant from his trips, including Sequoia Gigantea, Cedars of Lebanon, Deodar Cedar, California Cedar, lemon, walnut, and other varieties of fruit and nut trees.<sup>15</sup>

### **Summary of Structural Changes Made by John Muir**

A historic structure report is being prepared for the Strentzel-Muir house concurrent with the preparation of this report. Below is a short summary of findings presented in the 2003–2004 historic structure report (HSR). See *Historic Structure Report, Phase 1 of 3, John Muir House, Martinez, California, Interior Finishes Analysis Report* prepared for the National Park Service by Leslie Berman, Architectural Resources Group, in March 2003, for detailed information on wall, floor, ceiling, and trim finishes, and for a more comprehensive structural history.

The two-story Italianate-style Strentzel-Muir house is framed in redwood, and has a full basement and an attic. The original house has 17 rooms, and in the late 1890s Muir constructed a three-story addition at the rear of the house. The addition housed a new larger water tank on the second floor, and a servant's room on the ground floor.

After Dr. Strentzel's death in 1890, Mrs. Strentzel moved to the ground floor and the East Parlor was outfitted as a bedroom for her. A bathroom was located between the dining room and the East Parlor. After her death in 1898 the bedroom was turned into a parlor, or "sitting room."<sup>16</sup>

11 Helen Funk Muir to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, April 2, 1957, John Muir National Historic Site (hereafter JMNHS). (Helen Muir married Buel Funk but later changed her name to Helen Funk Muir.) *Historic Structure Report, Part II*, 4.

12 Ibid.

13 *Historic Structure Report, Part II*, 12 and 14.

14 This feature is found in the plans for a country house that appeared in *The California Architect and Building News*, 1882.

15 *Historic Structure Report, Part II*, 14.

16 Helen Muir letter, January 16, 1964, JMNHS, in Sally Johnson Ketcham, *Historic Furnishings Report John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California* (Harpers Ferry Center, National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, February 1971, revised 1982, hereafter 1982 HFR), 67.

Muir made changes to the East Parlor after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake slightly damaged the house. He removed the bathroom between the parlor and the Dining Room, and rebuilt the fireplace on the east wall using tan brick. He also cut archways between the hall and the parlor and between the parlor and the Dining Room at this time.

In the room south of his Study on the second floor, Muir built a red brick fireplace embedded with a piece of petrified wood. Shortly before his death in 1914, Muir cut out a passageway from the south wall of his Study to the bedroom beyond, creating an annex to his crowded room.

# Historical Occupancy

*The following “Analysis of Historic Occupancy” was taken from the 1971/1982 historic furnishings report written by Sally Johnson Ketcham. Text from the 1971–1982 HFR is boxed. New material appears in brackets and sans serif boldface within the box.*

## Scottish Ancestry

He [**John Muir**] was born in Dunbar, in the Scottish lowlands, on April 21, 1838. Although he lived his mature life in the United States, John Muir never forgot his Gaelic way of speech, his canny way of doing very well with very little, nor the memory of impoverished people living in dark squalid housing in the city of his birth. It was in the Wisconsin wilderness to which his father immigrated in 1849, however, that eleven-year-old John for the first time saw nature untouched by man. His early experiences on the Wisconsin farm and later impressions gained in the West influenced his decision to devote his life to exploring and to urging the preservation of the great scenic reserves of his adopted country.

There was little in his Scottish ancestry to indicate the scholarly bent his mind would take. John Muir’s father was Daniel Muir, an ex-British soldier.<sup>17</sup> His mother, Ann Gilrye, was the daughter of a well-to-do retired meat merchant.<sup>18</sup> Life was comfortable for the Muirs in Scotland, with dotting grandparents nearby to assist with the growing Muir family. As he grew older, John developed a warm friendship with his Grandfather Gilrye, and together they took long walks in the country. It was his grandfather who taught him how to tell time by the old clock in the Town Hall. Later, in Wisconsin he whittled his own timepieces of amazing complexity. One, which received great attention at the State Fair, is now in the collections of the University of Wisconsin.<sup>19</sup>

## Arrival in Wisconsin

Grey-eyed Ann Gilrye Muir was a quiet woman, who loved nature and often took long solitary rambles. Daniel, on the other hand, was a dogmatic and demanding father whose search for a satisfying religion was not ended until he joined the Disciples of Christ, a group spreading

17 Daniel Muir was the son of a professional soldier, John Muir, who married an English woman, Sarah Higgs. Daniel was orphaned when an infant and was raised by his sister Mary. He was extremely fond of music and having no money to purchase a violin, he made his own instrument. He died in Kansas City at his daughter’s home in 1885. See William Frederic Bade, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, Volume I (Boston, 1924), 4.

18 David Gilrye (Gilderoy, Gilroy) was born July 15, 1767, and married Margaret Hay in 1795. Anne, who married Daniel Muir, was their seventh daughter. She was Daniel’s second wife. His first wife bought his way out of the army but died soon after. Bade, *Life and Letters*, 12–14.

19 Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness, the Life of John Muir* (New York, 1946), Vol. I, 13.

out to America. The restless Daniel Muir soon fell under the spell of their call to settle the new country across the ocean. On February 19, 1849, Daniel selected John, David, and Sarah from among his children to begin the long trip to America, leaving his wife and other family members to come when he had established a home for them.<sup>20</sup>

Near Kingston in Marquette County, Wisconsin, on the Fox River, Daniel located eighty acres with plenty of oaks alongside a lake filled with fish. With the help of neighbors, the Muirs built a cabin and Daniel called his new claim “Fountain Lake Farm.” In due time the rest of the family consisting of mother, Margaret, Mary, Anna, and Daniel joined them. Baby Joanna was born in Wisconsin. Work on the farm was hard, for Daniel’s experience in the British Army had taught him there should be no shirking of duties. John was avid to learn and persisted despite the long hours of work on the farm. To have time to study, John had to awaken long before dawn. He accomplished this by rigging up his own invention, a clock bed that tipped up when set for a particular hour. To please his father there were daily stints of learning hymns or Bible verses. He soon developed a memory that was almost photographic. The forest, meadows, and lakes of his new home became schools in which his superior mind stored up observations of nature.<sup>21</sup>

Muir’s experiments with machinery, whittled and carved from wood, brought him to the attention of outsiders. Finally, in 1860, he escaped the confining farm life and left home to attend the University of Wisconsin. At this time, John Muir was described as a “cheerful, optimistic, splendid man, six feet in height, straight as an arrow, with light hair, full beard, clear blue eyes, and a skin smooth and transparent.”<sup>22</sup> Muir, himself, believed that the hard physical work to which he had been subjected at a young age left him less than his full growth would have been. Farm labor – plowing, mowing and cutting grain, cultivating corn, rail splitting for fences, and many other hard jobs then done by physical labor with axes, hoes, scythes, and saws – gave him a wiry body capable of enduring the hardships that would be demanded of it in the future.

John Muir from his earliest years was a nonconformist, who “found himself” only after experimenting with a great number of interests. At the University he failed to adhere to the prescribed curriculum. Planning to study medicine, he elected to take courses in chemistry and geology, but later he drifted toward botany. The school years were pleasant ones. He made many friends, among whom were Professor Ezra Slocum Carr and his wife, Jeanne. The latter particularly had a far reaching influence upon Muir’s life. Professor Carr taught Natural Science and Chemistry at the school. Mrs. Carr was a native of Vermont, and this uncommonly gifted woman was passionately devoted to the study of plants.<sup>23</sup> In 1863, Muir left the University of Wisconsin without his degree and began an extensive foot-tour through Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and into Canada. Finding employment necessary and with his uncanny ability to invent machines, John Muir was hired by a wagon factory in Indianapolis, until an injury to his eye turned his thoughts back to botany and the natural sciences. Once again, he began a long walking tour to the Gulf of Mexico. Eventually taking a boat, he arrived in California.

20 Ibid., 22–23.

21 Ibid., 20.

22 Ibid., 85.

23 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 80.

## Arrival in California

It was on March 28, 1868, that John Muir landed on the San Francisco wharf and began his life-long love affair with the great Sierra country and a life-long career of study and dedication to preserving its beauty for future generations. Accompanied by a young Englishman, named Chilwell, Muir immediately left San Francisco on foot and traveling through the Santa Clara Valley crossed the Diablo Range at Panceco Pass. Here he first glimpsed the snowy peaks of the distant Sierra Nevada range. Journeying across the flower-covered prairies of the San Joaquin Valley, up the Merced River, he came to Yosemite Valley, which he explored during the summer of 1868.<sup>24</sup> For six years, until the autumn of 1873, he remained in the mountains, working, exploring, collecting plants, and making sketches. He became cognizant of the destruction that sheep grazing and lumbering were doing to the great wilderness areas.

Viewing the Yosemite Valley with fresh eyes, John Muir became interested in the geological explanation of its formation. The great contrasts of broad, parklike valley floors, sheer cliffs surmounted by massive rounded domes, and spectacular waterfalls excited his mind. He began to find huge glacier-transported boulders, abrupt morainal ridges, polished and gouged rock surfaces, and other signs of glacial activity. Finally, he discovered the presence of modern glaciers still active in the High Sierra in the summer of 1871, a discovery that brought his hypothesis of a glacial origin of the great Yosemite Valley in direct antithesis with that of the State Geologist of California, Josiah D. Whitney, who had flatly denied that a glacier ever had invaded the area.<sup>25</sup> The controversy would rage for years.

Life in the mountains had its pleasant aspects. One of those occurred in October 1872, when John Muir, descending to his cabin below the Royal Arches, met three men – all artists. They were Benomi Irwin, Thomas Ross, and William Keith. To the latter, a stocky, shaggy-haired Scot with deep-set eyes, John Muir particularly was attracted and upon Keith he would have the greatest influence. The loquacious Muir impressed Keith with his own ideals of portraying the mountains and scenes as he saw them and not in the more romantic vein popular with artists of the period. Soon after their second outing together in the Sierra in the summer of 1873, Keith's paintings began to take on "Muir realism." So highly did Muir think of Keith's landscapes at this time that he became their foremost interpreter. His reviews, several of them copied far and wide over the country, started a great buying rush that made the artist wealthy.<sup>26</sup>

The beauties of Yosemite attracted many scientists and famous personages, and Muir's fame as a botanist and as a guide brought many contacts, among whom was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Although Muir was only thirty-three and Emerson was sixty-seven, a warm friendship developed during their short acquaintanceship.<sup>27</sup> To the valley came Joseph LeConte, an authority on glaciers and leading supporter of Muir's glacier theory, and Albert Kellogg the botanist from the California Academy of Science. Also to arrive were professor Louis Agassiz, then regarded as the leading authority on glaciation, John Swett, who would receive an honorary degree from the University

24 Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains, the Unpublished Journals of John Muir* (Boston, 1938), ix.

25 *Ibid.*, xi.

26 *Ibid.*, 181.

27 Ralph Waldo Emerson visited the Yosemite Valley in May 1871. Their meeting is described in *Bade, Life and Letters*, 253–58.



of California with John Muir in later years, and Dr. Asa Gray the famous botanist from Cambridge.<sup>28</sup> These associations led to correspondence, exchange of ideas and books, identification of plants, and the widening of Muir's intellectual horizons. All urged Muir to write for publications, but his greatest encouragement came from Mrs. Carr, who was now living in Oakland and who sent many notables to Yosemite with letters of introduction to John Muir. She also forwarded his writings to publishers.

The Oakland home of Ezra and Jeanne Carr became the center of Muir's social life when he was forced to leave his beloved Sierra country. Indeed, he had intended to stay with the Carrs when he finally retreated to the Bay Area in 1873 to write. The sudden death of the Carrs' eldest son and their subsequent mourning, however, caused Muir to accept instead the offer of a room in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. B. McChesney at 1364 Franklin Street.<sup>29</sup>

### **Meeting with the Strentzels**

The hospitality of the warm open-hearted Carrs was well known. It was in their home that John Muir met Dr. and Mrs. John Theophile Strentzel.<sup>30</sup> Dr. Strentzel had lived a colorful life. Born in Poland, at a young age he had entered the army. When the Poles suffered defeat from the Russians, he had escaped to Budapest, where he studied medicine. Eventually emigrating to the United States, he had found his way to Honey Grove, Fanninger, Texas, where he married Louisiana Erwin on December 31, 1843.<sup>31</sup> Like many young couples of the period, Dr. Strentzel and his wife left Texas to go to California in the year of the Gold Rush, 1849. He was medical advisor to the Clarkesville wagon train of pioneers. The Strentzels did not remain long in the gold fields, and in 1853, they bought land in the Alhambra Valley near the town of Martinez.<sup>32</sup> Here he practiced medicine and became a land owner. At the time John Muir became acquainted with him, Dr. Strentzel made wine, an art he had learned while working in a winery in Budapest, and he won many prizes at the California State Fairs.<sup>33</sup>

He also experimented with new varieties of fruits in his orchards and on his land. The Strentzels' hospitable ranch home was a refuge for many Polish political refugees. Mmd. Modjeska, the Shakespearian actress, remained there six months while she learned to speak English and prepared for her American debut in San Francisco. Her husband, Count Bozenta, and Henry Sienkiewicz, author of *Quo Vadis*, were guests also.<sup>34</sup>

Accompanying the Strentzels to the Carrs' home was their daughter, Louie Wanda, a quiet, light-haired, grey-eyed girl.<sup>35</sup> A graduate of Miss Atkins' Young Ladies' Seminary at Benicia (later Mills College), Louie Strentzel had shown great promise of becoming a concert pianist. However, she had preferred to remain at home helping her father with the supervision of the laborers, keeping

28 John Muir and Professor Agassiz did not meet, although a correspondence was initiated between the two.

29 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 399.

30 Charles Norman, *John Muir, Father of Our National Parks* (New York, 1957), 135.

31 Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Strent Hanna by John Jensen, June 8, 1966 and July 13, 1966, JMNHS.

32 According to Dr. Strentzel's journal the valley originally was named "Canada de la Hembra" by hungry Spanish soldiers sent to punish some Indians. Mrs. Strentzel named it in honor of Irving's Moorish paradise, Alhambra. Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 99.

33 Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Strent Hanna by John Jensen, June 8 and July 13, 1966, JMNHS.

34 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 356.

35 Two other Strentzel children, Lottie and John, had died in childhood. Diary of Dr. Strentzel, notes courtesy of John Jensen, JMNHS.



accounts, and hiring and paying the men on the ranch. Since the ranch produced and shipped hundreds of tons of fruit annually and her father's health was frail, this was no small responsibility. Now twenty-seven and unmarried, Louie was a mature young woman, passionately fond of flowers and music, and a poised and gracious hostess in her parents' home.<sup>36</sup> She also had a knowledge of astronomy and could name the constellations in the bright California sky.<sup>37</sup>

The Strentzels had desired a meeting with John Muir for some time. Mrs. Strentzel, reading the first of his series on mountain structure, confided to her diary:

How I should love to become acquainted with a person who writes as he does. What is wealth compared to a mind like his! And yet I shall probably never see him.<sup>38</sup>

Mrs. Carr had planned unsuccessfully for a meeting for some two years. In a letter to Louie Strentzel, she had commented, "I want you to know my John Muir. I wish I could give him to some noble young woman 'for keeps' and take him out of the wilderness into the society of his peers."<sup>39</sup>

At this time, John Muir had matured during his years in the mountains and had a wide circle of friends. Sarah Jan Lippincott, writing under the pen-name of Grace Greenwood, described him:

Mr. Muir talks with a quiet, quaint humor, and a simple eloquence which are quite delightful. He has a clear blue eye, a firm, free step, and marvelous nerve and endurance. He has the serious air and unconventional ways of a man who has been much with Nature in her grand, solitary places. The tourist is fortunate who can have John Muir for a guide in and about the Valley.<sup>40</sup>

Although fascinated by his Sequoias, glaciers, and myriad plants, John Muir was beginning to feel a longing for roots and a home. As early as 1869, in a letter to his sister Sarah, he expressed the great conflict between a settled life and his urge to explore:

The sweets of home, the smooth waters of civilized life have attractions for me whose power is increased by time and constant rambling, but I am a captive, I am bound. Love of pure unblemished Nature seems to overmaster and blur out of sight all other objects and considerations. I know that I could under ordinary circumstances accumulate wealth and obtain a fair position in society, and I am arrived at an age that requires that I should choose some definite course of life . . .<sup>41</sup>

## Marriage

Three years passed after his meeting with Louie Wanda Strentzel, however, before John Muir upon a sudden impulse visited the Alhambra Valley Ranch. During his Nevada explorations in 1878 with the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, his correspondence with the Strentzels indicated a growing friendship between the four. As his visits increased, his romance with the

36 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 100.

37 Letter of Helen Funk Muir to her grandson, John Muir, July 26, 1963, JMNHS.

38 Quoted in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 174–75.

39 Ibid.

40 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 262.

41 Letter to sister Sarah in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 204.

quiet Louie, whose description is so like that of John's mother, Ann, blossomed. On June 20, 1879, when Muir sailed on the steamer *Victoria* for Alaska, Dr. Strentzel and Louie saw him off.<sup>42</sup> Soon thereafter, wine, jelly, and cherry preserves were making their way to John Muir in Alaska.<sup>43</sup> On his part, John Muir sent back a book, maps, and pressed leaves to the trio.

After his return from his Alaska trip, John Muir announced his engagement to Louie Strentzel to some of his friends. Shoals of congratulatory letters deluged the happy couple. John Muir was loved by his friends for his hatred of shams, scorn for the conventions of life, his boldness and fearlessness under attack, and for his deeply religious sentiments and beliefs.<sup>44</sup> Mrs. John Swett, an old friend, wrote Louie of her joy in the engagement and warned gently that all would not be easy living with a man with the strength of character that John Muir had:

When Mr. Muir made his appearance the other night I thought he had a sheepish twinkle in his eye but ascribed it to a guilty consciousness that he had been up to Martinez again and fear of being rallied about it. Judge then of the sensation when he exploded his bombshell! . . . We were on our guard against being taken in, but the mention of Dr. Dwinell's name and a date settled it, and I have hunted up a pen to write you a letter of congratulation. For John and I are jubilant over the match. It gratifies completely our sense of fitness, for you both have a fair foundation of the essentials of good health, good looks, good temper, etc. Then you both have culture, and to crown all you have "prospects" and he has talent and distinction.

But I hope you are good at a hair-splitting argument. You will need to be to hold your own with him. Five times to-day he has vanquished me. Not that I admitted it to him – no, never! He not only excels in argument, but always take the highest ground – is always on the right side . . . Further, he is so truthful that he not only will never embellish sketch or word-picture by any imaginary addition, but even retains every unsightly feature lest his picture should not be true.

There I have said all I can in his favor, and as an offset I must tell you that I have been trying all day to soften his hard heart of an old animosity and he won't yield an inch. It is sometimes impossible to please him . . .<sup>45</sup>

On April 14, 1880, they were married. The ranch house had been made into a bower of flowers, with the halls almost covered with blooming boughs of the red Astrakan apple. Delayed by floods and a torrential rain, the Reverend I. E. Dwinell, a clergyman from Sacramento, was met at the station and rushed in a buggy to the ranch to perform the ceremony.<sup>46</sup> The bride's dress, ordered through the City of Paris in San Francisco, was imported from Paris. Typical of the 1880s style, it was all hand-finished and hand-crocheted, with a brocade insert, pleated ruffle around the bottom, and buttons down the bodice.<sup>47</sup> Among the wedding presents was a silver

42 Entry of June 20, 1879, in the diary of Mrs. Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, Bancroft Library, notes at JMNHS.

43 Entry of June 28, 1879, in Louisiana Erwin Strentzel diary, notes at JMNHS.

44 Henry Fairfield Osborn, *Impressions of Great Naturalists* (New York, 1924), 204.

45 Letter from Mary Louise Swett, April 8, 1880, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 131–33.

46 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 214.

47 The wedding dress, along with slippers, fan, and shawl, were donated to the site by Mrs. Jean Clark.

cake stand.<sup>48</sup> A notice of their marriage appeared in the weekly *Contra Costa Gazette*. The young couple lived in the original Strentzel Ranch house. John had saved several thousand dollars from his many jobs, lectures, and writing. For the latter he was receiving as much as two hundred and fifty dollars **[for each]** magazine article, a high price at that time. Turning his attention now to raising fruit and the marketing of the ranch products, he combined the canniness of a Scotsman with the knowledge of a botanist. Considering that in 1869, the Strentzels had sold 375,000 pounds of fruit and that grapes (Tokay, Catawaba, Malaga, Muscat), figs, walnuts, peaches, pears, mulberries, apples, oranges (Sissly), lemons, Osage orange, cherries, olives, pecans, beans, melons, corn, plums, hay, quince, asparagus, pomegranates, carrots, and peas, in addition to hogs, beef cattle, chickens, and turkeys had to be taken care of, he had no small task before him.<sup>49</sup> To some of his friends, it seemed he had indeed abandoned his intellectual pursuits for mundane profits.

Receiving the ranch house to which the Strentzels had added a bedroom in 1879 and twenty acres surrounding it as a wedding present from Louie's parents, John Muir leased more land from his father-in-law and began to put his own theories into operation. Apparently the failing health of Dr. Strentzel and the financial needs of his family in Wisconsin influenced Muir in his decision to abandon his own writing career in favor of horticulture. Land that Dr. Strentzel had grown hay and grain on was planted to vines and fruit trees. Although Dr. Strentzel had experimented with the best varieties of fruit attainable in Europe, John Muir believed the period of experimentation was past and favored concentration upon the most successful varieties. Bartlett pears and Tokay grapes commanded the highest market prices. Therefore, he grafted Dr. Strentzel's sixty-five varieties of pears to the Bartletts and the many kinds of grapes to Tokays.<sup>50</sup>

The Strentzel Wharf was at Martinez, and on steamer days the ranch wagons, loaded with fruit, rolled down the valley at dawn to be met by the eager commission merchants. Strentzel products were in demand by both Eastern and Western markets, but it was said nobody ever got the better of John Muir in a deal and that his tilts with the fruit jobbers of San Francisco made history in the valley.<sup>51</sup> As the ranch profited, Muir would drive up to the bank, put out a big white bag labeled "Laundry," and vanish inside. In the ten years he gave to more or less intensive ranching, it was estimated that he built up a savings account of \$50,000, which he never touched during his lifetime.<sup>52</sup>

John Muir had written on the Tuolumne Divide in 1872:

There perhaps are souls that never weary, that go always unhalting and glad, tuneful and songful as mountain water. Not so, weary, hungry me. In all God's mountain-mansions, I find no human sympathy, and I hunger.<sup>53</sup>

Now, at last, John Muir found companionship, a place in a warmly receptive family, and a wonderfully sensitive wife, who seemed to sense his need almost before, he, himself, did. With complete unselfishness each summer while the vines were ripening, Louie sent her husband out to the

48 The cake stand is also owned by [the Muir family.]

49 Diary of Mrs. Strentzel, note at JMNHS.

50 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 230.

51 *Ibid.*, 230–31.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*, 89.

wilderness to renew his strength and peace of mind. The first summer after their marriage, he resumed his exploration of Alaska. At home, he planted, laid out roads through the fields, and made irrigation ditches in the garden. Quail, rabbits, and squirrels abounded all over the ranch. The Strentzels had planted many flowers – fleur-de-lis, roses, fuchsia, heliotrope, daisy, rosemary, and sweet pea – on the grounds around their home. From his many trips, John Muir brought cuttings and seedlings, including his beloved heather, to add to the riot of color.

For the man, who in the wilderness had found time to enjoy and even correspond with children, life must have seemed complete in March of the year following his marriage, when he became the proud father of a little girl, who was given the name Wanda.<sup>54</sup> After the arrival of Wanda, John Muir invited his sisters, Sara and Margaret, to visit his home, paying all their expenses himself. Worn out from their early hard life on the farm, the two semi-invalid women renewed themselves picking oranges and flowers and visiting with the Strentzels.<sup>55</sup>

### **The New House**

The Strentzels constructed their new home on a hill overlooking Martinez in 1882. By early 1883 Dr. Strentzel and his wife had moved into their new residence. See History of the Structure section, above, for more on the construction of the house.

Life in the new house was pleasant. Frequent visitors were Louie, baby Wanda, and John's sisters, Sarah and Margaret. Mrs. Strentzel obviously was delighted with her little granddaughter, noting in her diary that Wanda said "Papa" perfectly and then a few days later "Mama."<sup>56</sup> The baby's first tooth on February 4, 1882, also was newsworthy. Dr. Strentzel remained active in the Alhambra Grange, from which in 1880 he received a silver goblet in recognition of his services as president.<sup>57</sup> He gave many addresses at their meeting, reported his experiments, and in 1884, was elected president for the eleventh consecutive term.<sup>58</sup> In the latter year, Dr. Strentzel was recognized for his past services to the Grange by the *California Patron*, which must have been a source of great pride to all his family.<sup>59</sup> Coddling worms and pear slugs which attacked his orchards occupied his attention, and he advised others on how to rid themselves of these pests. Poisons kept in the house, however, caused serious injury to John Muir and one of the Chinese workmen. A blazing can of phosphorus stored in the cellar was thrown outside by the workman, hitting Muir, and discharging the fiery compound on his clothing. Although his hands were burned severely, there was no further injury to his body.<sup>60</sup> Probably the prompt medical attention Dr. Strentzel could administer did much to ease Muir's immediate pain.

54 "Muir – At the Alhambra residence of Dr. John Strentzel, near Martinez, March 25th to Mr. and Mrs. John Muir, a daughter." *Contra Costa Gazette*, April 9, 1881.

55 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 230.

56 December 24, 1881 entry, Diary of Mrs. Strentzel, notes at JMNHS.

57 *Contra Costa Gazette*, February 14, 1880.

58 *Ibid.*, December 8, 1883, and December 13, 1884.

59 In 1877 Louie had been elected "Flora," the Grange Goddess of Flowers and Spring, although not a member. Mrs. Strentzel indicated in her diary that Muir was opposed to the Grange institution. January 22, 1882 entry, Diary of Mrs. Strentzel, notes at JMNHS.

60 *Contra Costa Gazette*, September 10, 1882.

Both Dr. Strentzel and the motherly Mrs. Strentzel seem to have taken John Muir to their hearts from the moment they met him. Letters written by Muir during his frequent trips away from the family contain messages to his mother-in-law to reassure her regarding his health:

We had fresh-baked stuffed codfish for breakfast, of which I ate heartily, stuffing and all, although the latter was gray and soft and much burdened with minced onions, and then I held out my plate for a spoonful of opaque, oleaginous gravy! This last paragraph is for grandmother as a manifestation of heroic, all-enduring, all-engulfing health.<sup>61</sup>

Apparently his appetite had caused Mrs. Strentzel as great concern as it had his companions of his earlier trips, who had commented that he could survive indefinitely on tea and crackers or flour made into bread and baked on a stone in the campfire. His wiry frame thrived without meat, and often he went for days without food of any kind when a sudden snowstorm overtook him on the mountains. His trips to the wilderness during the summer were a tonic for him, although he was never without thought of his wife and child. He wrote:

Now you must be sure to sleep early to make up for waking during the night, and occupy all the day with light work and cheerful thoughts, and never brood and dream of trouble, and I will come back with a knowledge that I need and a fresh supply of the wilderness in my health. I am already quite well and eat with savage appetite whatsoever is brought within reach.

This morning I devoured half of a salmon trout eighteen inches long, a slice of ham, half a plateful of potatoes, two biscuits, and four or five slices of bread, with coffee and something else that I have forgotten, but which was certainly buried in me and lost. For lunch, two platefuls of soup, a heap of fat compound onion hash, two pieces of toast, and three or four slices of bread, with potatoes, and a big sweet cake and now at three o'clock I am very hungry- . . . There! Is that enough, grandmother? All my table whims are rapidly passing into the sere and yellow leaf and falling off.

I promise to comfort and sustain you beyond your highest aspirations when I return and fall three times a day on your table like a wolf on the fold. You know those slippery yellow custards — well, I eat those also!<sup>62</sup>

While Muir was away, Louie coped with keeping house, caring for her baby, and assisting with the ranch details, both for her father and her own acreage. From his trips, John brought toys and other mementos to his family. In Alaska, he secured “a great quantity of ivory dolls and toys – ducks, bears, seals, walruses, etc.” for Wanda to play with upon his return.<sup>63</sup> On one northern trip he purchased some soft white furs to make a carriage robe for her and had an Indian make her a little fur suit. In an Eskimo village in which the people had died of starvation two years previously, he found a little box of child’s playthings “which might please Anna Wanda, but which, I suppose, you will not let into the house.”<sup>64</sup> When away he grew homesick for his little family and worried that

61 Letter to Mrs. Muir, Unalaska, May 18, 1881, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 170.

62 Letter to Mrs. Muir, Unalaska, May 22, 1881, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 171–72.

63 Letter to Mrs. Muir, July 2, 1881, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 181.

64 *Ibid.*, 184.

his daughter would be afraid of his long beard when she saw him. More and more he was needed at home. In 1882, after his Alaska trip, he wrote to a friend:

I found last summer in the lord's Arctic palaces, . . . it is not now so easy a matter to wing hither and thither like a bird, for here is a wife and a baby and a home, together with the old press of field studies and literary work, which I by no means intend to loose [*sic*] sight of even in the bright bewitching smiles of my wee bonnie lassie. Speaking of brightness, I have been busy, for a week or two just past, letting more light into the house by means of dormer windows, and in making two more open brick fireplaces. Dormer windows, open woodfires, and perfectly happy babies make any home glow with warm sunny brightness and bring out the best that there is in us.<sup>65</sup>

In the summer of 1884, Muir persuaded his wife, a reluctant traveler, to go with him to Yosemite. Little Wanda was left at home in the big house with her grandparents. The Muirs' letters home revealed amusing glimpses of a husband who had never played courtier to a wife and a wife who mistook trout for catfish and saw a bear behind every bush.<sup>66</sup> The Muirs returned from their trip, bringing along a splendid snow plant and a lily with fifty-two buds to plant on the ranch.<sup>67</sup>

In 1885, the presentiment of the approaching death of his father caused John Muir to leave the ranch hurriedly for his sister Joanna's home in Kansas City. Ten years later, the same foreboding sent him to his dying mother's bedside.

The Muirs' second daughter, Helen, was born in 1886. Never a strong child, Helen's frail health tied John to the ranch. Perhaps having a grandfather who was a physician enabled the child to weather her first anxious years. Although concerned about her daughter's health, Louie realized her husband's well-being depended upon his trips to the wilderness, and encouraging him to leave his responsibilities when he could, she wrote to him:

Even your mother and sister would understand. My father and mother at last realize your need of the mountains. Then as for the old ranch, why it is here, and a few grapes more or less will not make much difference.<sup>68</sup>

Quietly, Louie began to dispose of part of the ranch to free her husband to do the work he loved best. In 1887, under the urging of his wife and his friends, John Muir accepted a proposal to edit and contribute to an illustrated work entitled *Picturesque California*.<sup>69</sup> The initial writing involved several trips with his friend, William Keith, who was to do some of the illustrations; but to do his serious writing Muir was forced to seek a hotel room in San Francisco, where he could work uninterruptedly. For John Muir, writing came slowly and required much revision and polishing. In his letters to Louie, he often quoted from his recent writing, seeking her approval.<sup>70</sup> It may be that

65 Letter to Mrs. John Bidwell, January 2, 1882, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 192.

66 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 194.

67 *Contra Costa Gazette*, July 26, 1884.

68 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 280–81.

69 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 218.

70 Letters of July 11 and 12, 1889, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 225–28.



Louie's quiet praise and advice gave him needed confidence. Louie, herself, had a flair for writing. In 1865, Dr. Strentzel received a letter from her teacher, Dr. Parsaken, telling of original prose that Louie had written and remarking that it was very good.<sup>71</sup>

### **Death of Dr. Strentzel**

To one who inquired about his manner of life when he was home on the ranch, Muir wrote:

I get up about six o'clock and attend to the farm work, go to bed about nine and read until midnight. When I have a literary task I leave home, shut myself up in a room in a San Francisco hotel, go out only for meals, and peg away awkwardly and laboriously until the wee sma' hours or thereabouts, working long and hard accomplishing little. During meals at home my little girls make me tell stories, many of them very long, continued from day to day for a month or two . . .<sup>72</sup>

25

Optimistically, he looked forward to the day when he could hire a foreman to take care of the ranch, freeing him to travel, study, and write. In the meantime, after his meeting and camping trip to Yosemite with Robert Underwood Johnson, the editor of the *Century* magazine, Muir began to contribute a series of articles to the magazine, whose purpose was to establish a Yosemite National Park. Two features, the "Treasures of Yosemite" and "Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park," aroused strong public support, which culminated in Yosemite National Park becoming one of the national wilderness treasures on October 1, 1890.<sup>73</sup> The sudden death of Dr. Strentzel in October 1890, however, brought new responsibilities to the Muirs, just as John was preparing material for a new *Century* article to promote another National Park, the enlargement of Sequoia National Park to include the King's River region and the Kaweah and Tule Sequoia groves. Since Mrs. Strentzel could not live alone in the new house, Louie, John, and the two little girls left the upper ranch house, in which they had lived for ten years, to occupy the spacious new Strentzel home.

Heirs to Dr. Strentzel's estate were his wife, then sixty-five, and his daughter, Louie, thirty-eight. John Muir, now fifty-two, assumed the responsibility of the administration of the estate, which was shared equally by the widow and daughter. At the time the estate was probated, Dr. Strentzel had left a not inconsiderable fortune of \$286,411.92, which included cattle, horses, lots and blocks at Valona, shares in the Mt. Diablo Mining Company, lots and blocks in Martinez, land in San Francisco, mortgages, money in the bank, accounts and notes, shares of stock in the Bank of Martinez, shares of Grange stock, a loan due from the Grange, stock in the Martinez Garage Corporation, farm implements, 450 acres in Rancho Pinole, 1,400 acres in Canada del Hambre, and 240 acres in Las Juntas.<sup>74</sup> His furniture, jewelry, and library were appraised at \$1,000.

After the Muirs moved into the new house, life settled into a pleasant routine. The home must have seemed very different to Mrs. Strentzel, who now had the laughter of two granddaughters

71 Letters in collection of Strent Hanna, copies at JMNHS.

72 Letter to J. D. Butler, September 1, 1889, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 231–32.

73 In the 1860s, even before Yellowstone National Park was established, Muir had dreamed of preserving natural and unspoiled areas. Fountain Lake, his father's first Wisconsin farm, catalyzed the idea in his mind. See Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 393.

74 List of Strentzel property in collection of JMNHS.

echoing in the halls and their toys underfoot. As she became older, Mrs. Strentzel converted the **[east]** sitting room into a bedroom on the first floor with adjacent bathroom, while the Muirs occupied the second-floor bedrooms.<sup>75</sup> Apparently, the dark paneled library on the first floor did not appeal to John Muir as a study in which he could seclude himself while writing – or perhaps his untidiness was too much for the two ladies. Selecting the **[northwest]** bedroom with its sunny windows to use, John Muir moved his desk, books, notebooks, herbariums, etc. inside and stole those moments he could from the ranch to labor on his articles.

Although Louie Muir was a good cook, specializing in bread, fried chicken, and baked beans, there always was a Chinese cook in the house.<sup>76</sup> On the whole, the cooking was left to the servant.<sup>77</sup> Meal-times were periods of relaxation, story-telling, and often uproarious fun when John was home. Samuel Merrill, a guest in the house, was fascinated by his table talk, and noted that even when scholarly guests were present, Muir tactfully directed the conversation into light channels. Regardless of whether there were distinguished guests present or not, Wanda and Helen demanded and received another installment of one of his famous stories. A favorite was the adventures of Paddy Grogan, an original tale of an Irish youth and his kangaroo steed. According to young Merrill, Mrs. Muir, from her place at the head of the bountiful table, also listened, hanging on his words.<sup>78</sup>

In later years, her daughter Helen remembered how fond her mother was of picnics, and probably the family often packed a basket with food and hiked over the hills until a suitable picnic spot was found.<sup>79</sup> When he was home, John Muir joined in the walks on the hills with his wife and daughters. In an entry in his journal, Muir noted that Helen was “a wonderful climber, and vividly sees and enjoys the mossy rocks and ferns, etc.”<sup>80</sup> Nature never was far from his thoughts, as the following passage from his journal reveals:

The buckeye will soon be in full leaf. A few of the oaks also beginning to burst buds. Soaproots and Castilleia in flower. Tules on Suisun swamps are burning, sending up huge black columns of smoke like mushrooms with stalks one thousand feet high. The Sierra hidden with smoke.<sup>81</sup>

Always conscious of his beloved mountains, intense home-sickness for them sometimes swept over him and he wrote:

The view of the bay was charming – mirror-calm, shaded slightly by the gentle breeze in streaks. The colors of the hills far and near are fresh and beautiful. Had a fine view of the Sierra – solid white from summits to within two thousand feet of the plain. The snow yellowish as seen from here . . . All trains are stalled. Wish I could get off into it on snow-shoes. But this literary work will hold me fast for a long time.<sup>82</sup>

75 Letter of Helen Funk Muir, January 16, 1964, in collection of Mr. and Mrs. Sax. Copies at JMNHS.

76 Letter from Helen Funk Muir to John [Funk] Muir, July 26, 1963, JMNHS.

77 Interview with Mrs. Jean Clark, June 1966, by John Jensen, JMNHS.

78 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 255.

79 Letter from Helen Funk Muir to John [Funk] Muir, July 26, 1963, JMNHS.

80 Entry of January 24, 1895 in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 335–36.

81 Entry of February 16, 1896 in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 355.

82 Entry of January 24, 1895 in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 335–36.



The harsh, unforgiving religion of his father was not taught by John Muir to his children. His own belief that God was a loving, intelligent spirit, creating, permeating, and controlling the universe was the one he passed on to his little girls. There were prayers and Bible reading at home. But, in a day of strict religious upbringing of children, he preferred to teach only the Lord's Prayer and the great poetry of the Bible, Milton, Burns, and Shelley.<sup>83</sup> Muir felt that parents should take their religious responsibilities seriously, and at an early time, he wrote his brother:

I think infant baptism by sprinkling or any other mode is a beautiful and impressive ordinance, and however the Scripture of the thing is interpreted no parent can be doing an unseemly or un-Christian act in dedicating a child to God and taking upon him vows to lead his child in the path that all good people believe in. The baptism of an old sinner is apt to do but little good, but the baptism of an infant, in connection with the religious training which is supposed to follow it, is likely to do very much good.<sup>84</sup>

Mrs. Muir, however, may have had more conventional views about religion. In addition to donating lots in Martinez for the construction of the city library, her mother and she also gave lots for a new Methodist Church.

During their early school years, the girls were tutored at home. Two of the tutors roomed at the house, but later a local teacher came daily. Eventually Wanda attended school at Miss Head's in Berkeley, but Helen, perhaps because of her delicate health, stayed closer and attended Martinez High School.<sup>85</sup>

In the front parlor stood the Steinway grand piano, but it was played only during Muir's absences. Despite Louie's talent and despite his own love for balladry, which was one of his earliest memories, John Muir could not abide the sound of the piano being played. With typical unselfishness, his wife closed the keyboard and left it untouched when he was home. Her daughters, however, inherited an interest in music, and Wanda learned to play the violin and Helen the guitar. Sometime after 1890, John Muir constructed a three-story addition to the south or rear of the house to contain a metal water tank to use for domestic purposes. Mrs. Muir turned the second floor area into a soundproof practice room for the girls and their instruments.<sup>86</sup>

The girls made several camping trips to Yosemite and the King's River with their father when they grew older, and once they took a boat trip with their father and the artist Keith to Portland.<sup>87</sup> Helen, particularly, was close to her father. With him, she planted trees and bushes to landscape the grounds around the house. Helen recalls: "I planted 2 cedars, Mother planted sequoias. There was a camphor tree. The Chinaman, father, and I planted the orange and lemon trees at the entrance from the adobe side."<sup>88</sup> Helen had a saddle horse named "Art," which she rode over the ranch. Cats roamed the ranch, catching gophers, lizards, and birds to Muir's horror. One cat

83 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 232.

84 Letter to David Gilrue Muir, April 10, 1870, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. I, 217–18.

85 Interview with Helen Funk Muir, July 1962, JMNHS.

86 Letter from Helen Muir, February 4, 1957, JMNHS.

87 Interview with Helen Funk Muir, July 1962, JMNHS.

88 Letter from Maymie Kimes to L. Stumpff, March 1, 1983, regarding Kimes' July 1962 interview with Helen Muir, JMNHS.

named “Tom” made himself at home in John Muir’s study, curling up by the fireside on cold days and coming downstairs to sit by his master’s chair at mealtimes to receive tidbits. Louie Muir did not like cats, but one saved her life by staring at a rattlesnake so she tolerated them about the house.<sup>89</sup> Chickens and dogs roamed the ranch also. One brown collie, Stickeen II (called Keenie), named for the famous dog that Muir found in Alaska, belonged to Helen. Once Muir caught a small screech owl, who was dozing on the door-top of an outhouse, and brought him to his room. He flew about bumping his head against the window and probably soon was allowed his freedom by the tenderhearted Muir.<sup>90</sup>

The girls’ birthdays were special days to the family. In his diary on January 23, 1895, Muir wrote:

This is Helen’s birthday and she is greatly excited about it, for it marks, she says, the end of her babyhood. She is nine, and says she will not long answer to the name of Baby. If people ask for Baby in this house, now they must go and look for a baby. The bright day, she says, seems to have been sent just for her. She celebrates the day on the hills. She climbs well and is in perfect health – an unspeakable blessing after the extreme delicacy of her earliest years.<sup>91</sup>

Wanda’s birthday fell on March 25, and on that date he recorded:

Cloudy, threatening rain. Wanda’s birthday – the fourteenth – happy girl. Heaven bless her always. I dread pain and trouble in so sweet and good a life. If only death and pain could be abolished! She went over to the old ranch to lunch and play and climb the hills with May and Helen and her mother.<sup>92</sup>

On his own birthday, he remarked that although he was fifty-seven, he felt like a boy.<sup>93</sup> His fifteenth wedding anniversary was noted but no elaboration made. Muir viewed the Fourth of July dimly. It was alien to his nature. Not so was it to his wife and children however, and Muir described one Independence Day that was duly celebrated:

Passed the glorious Fourth at home, occupied as usual. The bunting and gunpowder have no charms for me, only something to escape from. The children burned a few firecrackers – made a show of patriotism with two small flags on the front step, then ate ice-cream and walked with me over to the old ranch . . . The day has been strangely dark and cold with black clouds and light sprinkling rain, as if Nature frowned on the affair.

The herons are all on the wing – . . . In the evening, Mr. Coleman brought a lot of rockets and Roman candles, which made a handsome show and greatly delighted the children.<sup>94</sup>

89 Helen Funk Muir to John [Funk] Muir, July 26, 1963, JMNHS.

90 Entry of January 29, 1895 in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 335.

91 Entry of January 23, 1895, in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 335. According to Helen Muir, the family doctor was Dr. Gibbon.

92 Entry of March 25, 1895, in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 337–38.

93 Entry of April 21, 1895, in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 340.

94 Entry of July 4, 1895, in Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 342.

The girls missed their father during his frequent absences from home. They wrote notes to him telling him that the wrens had built a nest in the box he had put up on the woodhouse, that the cats were fine, and that May [**the mother cat**] had two little ones, and that their mother's rheumatism was better. While he was back in the East receiving an honorary M. A. degree from Harvard and attending his mother's funeral, Muir wrote a tender little note to his younger daughter:

I have enjoyed your sweet, bright, illustrated letters ever and ever so much; both the words and the pictures made me see everything at home as if I was there myself – the peaches, and the purring pussies, and the blue herons flying about, and all the people working and walking about and talking and guessing on the weather.

Good-bye, darling, and give my love to Wanda and Mamma and Grandma and Maggie. Go over and comfort Maggie and tell Mamma to write to poor Sarah. Tell Mamma I spent a long evening with (Nicola) Tesla and I found him quite a wonderful and interesting fellow.<sup>95</sup>

To some the decade following his marriage was one of lost years; but during this period, despite family obligations, from his pen flowed a series of articles the like of which had never been written before about the American forests and scenery. "In the Heart of the California Alps," "Wild Sheep of the Sierra," "Coniferous Forests of the Sierra Nevada," and "Bee-pastures of California," appearing in *Scribner's Monthly* and the *Century* magazines, awoke American interest in the beauties of this great country. *Picturesque California*, which he edited, also contained numerous articles by himself. It had been John Muir's goal to earn enough money between 1880 and 1890 to support his family in comfort and to enable him to then devote his remaining days to writing and public service. It was not easy, however, to find someone to assume the management of the profitable fruit-growing interests of the Muir-Strentzel ranch. Finally, in the spring of 1891, his brother-in-law John Reid, who had married Margaret, gave up a long struggle to farm in Kansas and Nebraska during drought and grasshopper invasions and came west with his family to take charge of the ranch work with vigor and efficiency. With Margaret and her family now living in the old ranch house, John Muir not only was freer but also fulfilling his promise to look after his beloved relatives.<sup>96</sup>

With the coming of Reid, John was able to turn his attention to his first love, preserving the wilderness areas. Always an early riser, Muir had coffee alone, then worked until ten, at which hour he joined his wife, mother-in-law, daughters, and whatever company was in the house for a real breakfast. He was very fussy about his eggs. Once when he complained to a new cook about the ones she had served him, she talked back, saying, "If you can make them better, go ahead." This tickled him, and he turned down the offer.<sup>97</sup> Two other culinary favorites of his were muffins and bread custard.<sup>98</sup> When the meal was over, he read what he had written to his wife, who gave him valuable suggestions as well as praise.<sup>99</sup> Writing was torturously slow for Muir. Phrases were

95 Letter to Helen, July 3, 1896, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 297. "Maggie" was his sister, Margaret Reid. His sister, Sarah, and his sister, Anna, each spent a year living with the Muirs.

96 While generous to his family, John Muir was said to also be highly critical at times. Interview with Frank Swett, JMNHS.

97 Interview with Strent Hanna, June 8 and July 13, 1966, JMNHS.

98 Interview with Helen Funk Muir, July 1963, JMNHS.

99 Norman, *John Muir, Father of Our National Parks*, 162.

polished and rewritten many times before they satisfied him. Schooled in childhood to memorize long passages of the Bible and poetry, he remained sensitive to rhythmic language. So strong was the latter that he had a habit of beating time with an uplifted forefinger as he wrote. Of a certain ballad he said that it was one of his earliest memories and probably would ring in his ears when he was dying.<sup>100</sup> In his younger days, he wrote with a quill, often made from a feather he found on the ground during his walks. Later he wrote with a stub point steel pen. When Helen was old enough to assist him, she used a Hammond typewriter with letters on a shuttle to transcribe his notes to send to the publisher.<sup>101</sup> Those who watched him labor, regarded his agony with some astonishment. Henry Fairfield Osborn wrote the following:

Knowing his beautiful and easy style it is very interesting to learn how difficult it is for him; he groans over his labors, he writes and rewrites and interpolates. He loves the simplest English language and admires most of all Carlyle, Emerson, and Thoreau. He is a very firm believer in Thoreau and starts by reading deeply of his [*sic*] author. He also loves his Bible and is constantly quoting it, as well as Milton and Burns. In his attitude toward nature, as well as in his special gifts and abilities, Muir shares many qualities with Thoreau. First among these is his mechanical ability, his fondness for the handling of tools; second, his close identification with nature; third, his interpretation of the religious spirit of nature; fourth, his happiness in solitude with nature; fifth, his lack of sympathy with crowds of people; sixth, his intense love of animals.<sup>102</sup>

Muir, himself, said that he strove to say things attractively and clearly and that he wanted the meaning to stand out through the words like a fire on a hill so that all must see it without looking for it.<sup>103</sup>

Although John Reid now was in charge of the ranching operations, Muir's work suffered many interruptions. Entries in his journal mention that Scot was pulling out the Mission vines, Jim pruning, Joe plowing, and as an aside, that the larks were singing.<sup>104</sup> On one occasion he wrote:

Scot making fair headway on the vine snags. A few break off when pulled by two stout Norman horses. Most come out from two feet underground and give no further trouble. The Mission vine, the first planted in California, is a good table grape, but a poor wine grape, and brings a very low price for either table or wine. The padres ought to have known better – such good judges as they were in most things relating to the stomach.<sup>105</sup>

When three dozen single Cherokee rose bushes arrived, he joined in planting them along the new fence by the roadside. The bushes delighted him. He commented that he knew of no other investment that could give such delightful dividends of beauty at so cheap and pleasant a price. The lovely white blossoms, along the fence fifty rods long, must have made a beautiful showing.<sup>106</sup>

100 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, xiii–xiv.

101 Interview with Helen Funk Muir, July 1962, JMNHS.

102 Osborn, *Impressions of Great Naturalists*, 201.

103 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 337.

104 *Ibid.*, 336.

105 *Ibid.*, 336–37.

106 *Ibid.*, 339.

Some of the roses were planted at the grave of Dr. Strentzel, who was greatly missed by the family. In April, Muir set aside his writing to assist in staking and thinning the apricots and peaches.

The public-spirited citizens of California, who assisted in promoting the passage of the Yosemite National Park bill, came together and in 1892 were organized into the Sierra Club. John Muir was the first president, a position he held until his death. The influence of the Sierra Club, whose ideals were his own, was felt not only during his lifetime but continues undiminished today. Among the early members of the club were Warren Olney, Sr., Professors Joseph LeConte, J. H. Senger, William Dallam Armes, and Cornelius Beach Bradley. Offers to lecture continued to arrive, but he wrote the San Rafael Literary Club that after ten years away from the podium, he had given four lectures and then “escaped with fear and trembling to the shades rural of Contra Costa County, vowing henceforth eternal silence.”<sup>107</sup>

### **Death of Mrs. Strentzel**

Sorrow came to the family in the fall of 1897 when Mrs. Strentzel, whose health had been failing, died. John Muir, who had been away on one of his trips, reached home only two weeks before her death.<sup>108</sup> Louie inherited her mother’s estate, and the family continued to live in the big house.

In 1899, Muir was asked to join the Harriman Expedition with its complement of prominent scientists who were going to explore Alaska. Strong friendships were made during the trip, and Muir’s humor charmed all on board. Within a month of the ship’s return, the Muirs welcomed and entertained Captain Doran and his wife; G. K. Gilbert of the U. S. Geological Survey; C. Hart Merriam, and Henry Gannet in their home. Later, the famous botanist John Burroughs was a guest at the ranch.<sup>109</sup>

### **Meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt**

Postponing his world tour in 1903, John Muir instead met President Theodore Roosevelt in Yosemite. From this meeting were to come some of the most far-reaching of John Muir’s achievements. So influenced was the President by Muir’s persuasive arguments that upon his arrival in Sacramento, he dictated an address which said in part:

I ask for the preservation of other forests on grounds of wise and far-sighted economic policy. I do not ask that lumbering be stopped . . . only that the forests be so used that not only shall we here, this generation, get the benefit for the next few years, but that our children and our children’s children shall get the benefit. In California I am impressed by how great the State is, but I am even more impressed by the immensely greater greatness that lies in the future, and I ask that your marvelous natural resources be handed on unimpaired to your posterity. We are not building this country of ours for a day. It is to last through the ages.<sup>110</sup>

Roosevelt was a man who suited his words to action. In the eight years that he served in the White House (1901–1909), he set aside more than one hundred and forty-eight million acres of additional

107 Ibid., 355.

108 Ibid., 276.

109 Ibid., 287.

110 Quoted in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 143.

national forests and doubled the number of national parks. Under the Monuments and Antiquities Acts, passed during this administration, he proclaimed sixteen national monuments, including the Grand Canyon of the Colorado with an area of 806,400 acres. The warm friendship that developed between the two men during their outing was continued by correspondence.

In 1904, Muir finally embarked on his famous world tour, returning to California weighing 148 pounds, more than he ever had. Getting off the train at Muir Station near the ranch, he was met by his wife, John Reid, and his sister Sarah Galloway, now also living in California. The ribbing he received about his increased girth appealed to his sense of humor, and he responded by stuffing a pillow inside his clothing before striding majestically down to dinner.<sup>111</sup>

Wanda, now engaged, was away from home attending the University of California, where she joined the Gamma Phi Beta Sorority. Her father characterized her as a “faithful, steady scholar, not in the least odd or brilliant, but earnest and unstoppable as an avalanche.”<sup>112</sup> Vivacious Helen was happy and growing strong, although Muir did not dare predict what kind of scholar she would be. At the turn of the century, a new railway that crossed the vineyards near the house was built, and Helen soon developed an interest in railroading. Making friends with the engineers who stopped at Muir Station just above the Reid house (the upper ranch house), Helen often rode in the cab of the train and once is [*sic*] said to have run the engine itself from Stockton to Muir Station.

Visits with his old friend John Swett, who in 1881 had bought a ranch adjoining the Muir holdings in the Alhambra Valley, and trips to San Francisco to lunch with his old friend William Keith occupied his days. Paramount in Muir’s mind, however, was preserving his loved Yosemite Valley from those who were despoiling it. With the help of Mr. Johnson in the east and William E. Colby in the west, the Sierra Club organized and conducted summer outings of large parties of the Club members into the high Sierra country. Muir often spoke at the camp fires during the evenings.

### **Death of Louie Strentzel Muir**

In 1905, Helen became seriously ill, and the doctor recommended that she be taken to the dry air of Arizona for her convalescence. The task fell to John Muir to accompany her, but in the summer he was recalled to the bedside of his beloved Louie. Louie Strentzel Muir died on August 6, and the bereaved John was left to bury her beside her parents. C. Hart Merriam wrote of Louie that she was “a woman of more than ordinary character and ability . . . She was a clever and noble woman, but so retiring that she was known only to a few.”<sup>113</sup>

The house became intolerably lonely. Theodore Roosevelt wrote suggesting that he go to his mountains and trees as soon as he could, for they do him more good than either man or woman.<sup>114</sup> Muir’s first obligation was to Helen, however, and he returned to the desert to be with her. Discovering the remnants of a petrified forest in the southwest, he returned to his geological studies

111 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 301.

112 Letter to Katherine Merrill Graydon, October 22, 1900, in Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 338.

113 “To the Memory of John Muir,” *Sierra Club Bulletin* (January 1917), 146–51.

114 Bade, *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 353.



and urged Roosevelt to set the area aside as a national monument. Thus, in 1906, the Petrified Forest National Monument came into being.

In 1906, Wanda married Thomas R. Hanna, who had grown up on a nearby ranch. The young couple lived a short time after their marriage in the big house, while their own home was being made ready. Then, in the summer, Helen was able to return home to keep house for her father. Friends continued to visit the ranch, and J. D. Calkins, an Iowa newspaper man, left the following description of his own entertainment in the spacious house:

Bare-headed . . . and smiling a welcome he helped us carry our luggage into the house. Mrs. Muir had gone; only Mr. Muir and Helen were there, attempting to fill those spacious high-ceilinged rooms with an atmosphere of home . . . The dominant note . . . was simple dignity. No telephone, no electric lights, no domestic gadgets of all the myriad modern inventions. Candles and an open fire, and it was by the grace of the horse and buggy that one went to town. As we sat long at the table, the cheerful talk made each meal an event. The conversation was often embroidered with pleasant levity, and amusing anecdotes. There were never any jokes at our expense, but Helen was a fair mark for her father's jocundities, which she took with a pleased little laugh . . .<sup>115</sup>

When a train rumbled through the valley, both John Muir and Helen rushed from the table to wave to the engineers as they passed.

### **Earthquake of 1906**

In 1906, the great earthquake struck San Francisco and its outlying areas. The tremors were felt in the Alhambra Valley. The chief damage that the earthquake did to the Muir house centered around the fireplaces in the east parlor, the dining room, and in two bedrooms on the second floor. Outside chimneys tumbled down, and the plaster was cracked on the walls. Muir quickly went to work making repairs. In the sitting parlor [**east parlor**], the fireplace was rebuilt of brick. Totally unlike the small Victorian fireplaces in the other rooms, the new fireplace seemed to have an ancestry more in keeping with the desert and perhaps reflected the influence of Muir's visits to Arizona with Helen. At last, in a home heated only by fireplaces, John Muir could have the warmth of a "mountaineer's" fire. Also, after the earthquake, the downstairs powder room between the dining room and the east or sitting parlor was removed and a wide archway was cut through from the dining room to the parlor. Archways were cut through from both parlors to the front hall and the rooms were replastered.<sup>116</sup> In other respects, however, nothing changed. Muir permitted not even a chair to be moved that Louie had arranged before her death.

Much of the time he was away. He traveled to Los Angeles, doing some of his writing at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Hooker, or to New York, to write at the home of his friends Mr. and Mrs. Henry Fairfield Osborn. In the year 1910, he began working on "My First Summer in the Sierra," and two books, *The Story of My Boyhood* and *The Yosemite*. His study was crowded with note-

115 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 308. Mr. Calkins may have been mistaken about the absence of a telephone in the house. In 1891, Muir paid the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph \$3.50 monthly telephone and service and \$1.50 for line repair, JMNHS.

116 *Historic Structure Report, Part II*, 5.

books, sketchbooks, and the material of a lifetime of exploration. Sensing that time was growing short, he could select only a small part of his great accumulation on which to work.

Helen married Buel Funk and now lived in southern California or Arizona. Muir truly was alone in the great house. Fortunately, Wanda and her family lived near, and John Muir ate most of his meals with them at the adobe. In 1907, little Strentzel Hanna, his first grandson, had been born, and soon there were other little grandchildren to occupy his days. The grounds were kept like a park by the Chinese workmen.<sup>117</sup> Always kind to children, he kept candy, apples, and nuts on hand to distribute to those who came by the ranch. Although a canny Scotsman in a business deal, his files were filled with letters of gratitude from organized charities, relatives, friends, and needy people he helped. In his own neighborhood, he preferred to give anonymously, but one fall he asked his niece to drive him around on a tour of early Christmas giving. Drawing from the Bank of Martinez a supply of gold pieces, he drove to farmhouses and places where he had heard there was poverty. Perhaps the memory of the poor of Dunbar drove him to this action. On the way home, he stopped at the Swett ranch, where he gave his remaining gold pieces to the motherless grandchild of his old friend.<sup>118</sup>

In 1911, he undertook his great trip to South America and up the Amazon. Typically, unable to stop there, he went on to South Africa to see the Baobab tree. Honors poured in upon him. To the two Johns, John Muir and John Swett, the University of California awarded their degree, Doctor of Laws. Honorary degrees came also from Yale, Harvard, and the University of Wisconsin. He was granted membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in the Washington Academy of Sciences, and the American Association of the Advancement of Science extended a fellowship. He served as President of the Sierra Club and of the American Alpine Club. No recognition touched him more, however, than the establishment in 1908 of Muir Woods National Monument on a tract of *Sequoia sempervriens* [sic] owned by William Kent in Marin County.

Home remained lonely. At the suggestion of his friend, William Colby, Marion Randall Parsons of Berkeley went to the ranch to help with his writing. It now was apparent that he would need stenographic help to complete his work. Mrs. Parsons wrote:

He was living alone in the dismantled old home, unused save for his study and sleeping porch. He went to his daughter's home for his meals, but neither she nor anyone else was allowed to touch the study, overflowing . . . with books and papers . . .

By seven o'clock each morning Mr. Muir had breakfasted and was ready for the day's work, usually lasting . . . until ten at night . . . Each sentence, each phrase, each work underwent his critical scrutiny . . . His rare critical faculty was unimpaired to the end. So too was the freshness and vigor of his whole outlook on life. No trace of pessimism or despondency, even in the defeat of his most deeply cherished hopes, ever darkened his beautiful philosophy, and only in the intense physical fatigue . . . was there any hint of failing powers.<sup>119</sup>

117 Interview with Joe Figueredo by John Jensen, August 31, 1966, JMNHS.

118 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 310.

119 *Ibid.*, 345.



In the Huntington Library, there are ten versions of one page of a book he was writing. Mrs. Parson resorted to hiding completed pages, so that Muir could not change them.<sup>120</sup> His last strength was directed toward the fight to preserve the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite, but this last battle he was not to win.

### **Renovations on House**

Suddenly, in the summer of 1914, Muir began to renovate the house. Going to San Francisco, he bought new carpets and portieres for the first floor. He had the floors up and down painted and matting laid in the halls. A doorway was made between his study and bedroom, and the walls were lined with shelves for books. Most amazingly of all, Muir, who preferred the soft glow of candlelight, had electricity installed in the house.<sup>121</sup> On December 3, 1914, John Muir wrote to Helen:

There is no one in the old house but myself. If I could only have you and Wanda as in the auld lang syne, it would be lovely. But such backward thoughts are all in vain.<sup>122</sup>

### **Death of John Muir**

Homesick for Helen and her family, he packed his typed manuscript, *Travels in Alaska*, and went to see her. During the auto ride to the ranch from the railway station, he caught a cold, which developed into pneumonia. Wanda was sent for, but the end came suddenly on Christmas Eve in a Los Angeles hospital. His remains were brought back to the ranch to lie beside his devoted Louie.

Like the great Sequoia trees that he loved so well, his achievements stood like giants around him – Yosemite National Park, Kings Canyon and Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Mount Rainer, Muir Woods, and the Petrified Forest – to name but a few. William Fredric Bade wrote, “And when he had seen, and written down what he saw, men, charmed by the tale of his deep vision, went back armed with his eyes, even to the familiar, and found there new revelations of beauty.”<sup>123</sup> His friendships included presidents and famous scientists throughout the world, but perhaps for the modest man, who had watched a child nurture a few pathetic plants on her door stoop and had given away armfuls of flowers he had brought back from the fragrant hills of Marin County to the destitute and deprived children of San Francisco, the knowledge that he had preserved a bit of beauty and wilderness for succeeding generations to enjoy would have been achievement enough.

After John Muir’s death, Helen, who had inherited the house from her mother, sold it for “a song.” Most of the furnishings were moved from the big house into the adobe house occupied by Wanda and her husband. The latter daughter had inherited most of the land. Passing through a succession of hands, the house eventually was owned by the Kreiss family from October 5, 1937, to January 24, 1955. The Kreiss family made changes inside the house, wallpapered, renovated floors, etc. In 1955, they sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, although the house stood empty for almost a year before the latter moved inside. Both the Kreisses and the Saxes attempted to keep the house in a good state of repair. While it was empty, vandals invaded the house and did a great deal of damage to the interior, including breaking the onyx mantel in the west parlor.

120 Interview with William Kimes, October 5, 1966, JMNHS.

121 Letter to Helen, December 3, 1914. Collection of Sellers letters, JMNHS.

122 Norman, *John Muir, Father of Our National Parks*, 182.

123 John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (Garden City [New Jersey], 1961), xvi.

**John Muir National Historic Site Established**

On August 31, 1964, John Muir National Historic Site was authorized and established. The site, under Public Land Law 88-547 includes both the large Strentzel-Muir House, the Vicente Martinez Adobe, and of the original 2,300 acres of vineyards and fruit trees, eight and three-quarters acres of land.

# Furnishings Plan



# Evidence of Room Use and Recommended Furnishings

When it was constructed in 1882, the Strentzel-Muir house included 15 rooms. A conservatory and enclosed porch on either side of the house expanded living space in the roomy and comfortable house. John Muir constructed the water tower at the rear of the house in the late 1890s. In addition to the tank room, the tower added the “music room” on the second floor and a cook’s room on the first. The 1971 historic furnishings report, revised in 1982, documented all evidence concerning furnishings in the house uncovered to that date, and recorded the current owners of Muir furnishings and other related objects. Furnishings recommendations in the 1982 report have been partially implemented, with original and period objects exhibited in 11 rooms open to the public.

Additional furnishings research was conducted in 2003 with the goal of revising and reformatting lists of recommended furnishings included in the earlier report. In preparation for this most recent revision of the historic furnishings report, records in the collection of John Muir NHS were revisited, as were collections at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; the Contra Costa County Recorder’s Office; the Contra Costa County Historical Society; Special Collections at the University of the Pacific, and the San Francisco Public Library.

Recent research uncovered little new written evidence and no new photographic evidence documenting interiors at the house. As noted above, in accordance with park interpretive goals, park management determined to furnish three second-floor rooms based on evidence located in Muir letters, photographs, and other documentation. The first-floor Kitchen will be furnished based on illustrations, trade catalogs, and written descriptions of kitchens in use in the Muir era. Suggestions for accompanying media such as exhibits, labels, and interior waysides are included below in the sections on individual rooms.

The following information on Muir furnishings and room use has been excerpted from the 1971/1982 revised HFR, and updated where necessary. Text from the 1971–1982 HFR is boxed. New material appears in brackets and sans serif boldface within the box.

Wanda Muir Hanna and her husband, after the death of their father, John Muir, removed many of the furnishings from the Strentzel-Muir house into their own adobe home.<sup>124</sup> A surprisingly large quantity of these furnishings have survived and **[as of 1982]** are being used in the homes of the descendents of John and Louie Muir. Although there has been a reluctance on the part of the grandchildren **[and great-grandchildren]** to return these items to the site, the descendents of Helen and Wanda Muir **[historically]** have been cooperative in allowing the staff of John Muir NHS to study items in their possession, and in providing background material regarding each article.

The Strentzels and Muirs, as many wealthy families did, purchased items of furnishings and clothing from two well-known San Francisco stores, W. & J. Sloane and the City of Paris.<sup>125</sup> **[However, no information about the Muirs’ purchases was available from the records or archives of these stores.]** Furnishings that have survived are mid-

124 Upon her mother’s death, Helen Muir inherited the house, although John Muir continued to occupy it.

125 Interview with Mrs. Jean Clark by John Jensen, June 1966, JMNHS.

and late-Victorian **[in style]** and generally date from the 1850s to the early 1900s. Although the Strentzels were moderately wealthy for their time, the furniture that has survived indicates that their taste was not for the very elegant but ran to comfortable items with practical coverings and upholstery . . . gilded moldings, ceiling medallions, fine mirrors over the fireplaces to reflect the furnishings, and carpets on the floors satisfied the Strentzels' desire for refinement. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Strentzel moved some of her older furniture into the new house when it was completed in 1882–1883, and acquired new furniture for her rooms as it was needed.

Nothing in the personality of Louie Strentzel Muir indicates a liking for elaborate or ornate furnishings. John Muir, raised in a home that he himself described as without adornment and “a barren empty shell,” had a fondness for framed pictures, rich rugs, fine linen, and delicate embroideries, and during his travels he often wrote home about the furnishings that he had encountered.<sup>126</sup> Despite this regard for elegance in others, Muir dressed simply and seemed to have had little regard for money as it applied to himself, although more than wealthy enough to have had whatever he wished.<sup>127</sup> All in all, the house must have been a comfortably furnished country home, suitable for entertaining guests from San Francisco and other distant cities as well as local residents with whom the Muirs and Strentzels seem to have maintained friendly relations.<sup>128</sup>

Many of the articles of furniture owned by Muir descendents have undergone alteration. Sections of Victorian gingerbread have been removed from dressers; chairs and sofas have been re-covered; tables have been refinished; and different pictures placed in old frames. **[Two Eastlake-style bookcases were donated to the University of the Pacific in 1985 by Muir's grandson, Richard Hanna. They are currently located in the Holt-Atherton Reading Room.]** One of these may have been referred to by Mrs. Strentzel in her diary entry of April 20, 1879, “Received a bookcase made by Mr. Austin.”<sup>129</sup> Two of the bookcases . . . are so nearly identical that they could have been made by the same cabinet maker.

The majority of furnishings in the house are not original to the Muir occupancy. Original items in the collection include: a spoon and fork carved in Alaska; Alaskan spears and an atlatl **[sic]**; several baskets and pieces of pottery; the kitchen drainboard, stove and marble-topped work table; Muir's desk; Muir's world globe, eagle quill pen, and saddle; the Strentzel apothecary/bookcase; Muir's herbarium; and fixtures in the bathroom. Original pamphlets, letters, books, and family photographs are also in the collection.

**[Grandson]** Strentzel Hanna donated hoods awarded to John Muir when he received honorary degrees, and Mrs. Jean Clark **[Helen Muir's daughter]** donated Louie Strentzel Muir's wedding outfit, and three framed certificates **[displayed in Dr. Strentzel's library on the first floor.]** Muir's binoculars and two Strentzel engravings **[were donated to the site by Jean Hanna Clark. The typing table and hat rack may be original to the house, but do not carry firm provenances. It is not known whether the built-in pantry in the kitchen was constructed during Muir's lifetime. A plaster plaque of John Muir made by Gertrude Boyle, and plaques of friends John Swett and Joseph LeConte by the same artist are also in the collection.]**

Important mementos, souvenirs and other furnishings are also owned by **[the Muir family.]** These include a silver cake stand, which was a wedding gift to the Muirs; silverware that belonged to the Strentzels; the Keith portrait of Wanda that hung in Muir's study; glassware; ivory figurines brought from Alaska to baby Wanda; a shawl brought from Scotland to Mrs. Muir; Indian baskets and pottery; an aneroid barometer; John Muir's microscope, and additional paintings by William Keith. **[The Muir family]** owns the silver cups awarded to Dr. Strentzel. Most of Muir's personal library is housed in the collections of the University of the Pacific.

126 Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 43.

127 At the time of his death, John Muir's cash alone totaled \$179,758.91. JMNHS.

128 Dr. Strentzel's continued re-election to the office of president of the Grange indicates he was well liked locally.

129 Notes at JMNHS.

The paintings by William Keith were hung throughout the house, and no artifacts carry a closer association with the spirit and character of John Muir, who exerted a strong influence upon the artist. Even before Muir became a member of the family, however, the Strentzels were patrons of Keith. In 1879, Mrs. Strentzel recorded in her diary that she “received a Keith painting from Mrs. Carr and a chromo.”<sup>130</sup> The artist painted the portraits of John Theophile and Louisiana Erwin Strentzel that originally hung in the west parlor.<sup>131</sup> The originals of these portraits are in the collections of the Martinez City Library. The only other artist known to have been represented in the house was Thomas Hill, whose painting “Muir Glacier” was given to the Oakland Museum by Richard Hanna. **[Muir also owned “Mt. Rainier,” “Shasta,” “Yosemite,”<sup>132</sup> “Unfinished Sierra Scene,” and “Tuolumne Meadows” by Keith.]**

Although the house had gas connections, both the Strentzels and the Muirs preferred soft lamplight or candlelight. John Muir favored the latter throughout his life, **[although he wired the house for electricity in 1912]**. Flickering candles highlighting the rich gilt frames of his beloved Keith landscapes must have been a source of great satisfaction to the beauty-starved soul of Muir.

Busy with the ranching operations and his own studies and writing, John Muir had little time for hobbies. Helen Muir mentioned newspaper artist drawings of his early inventions as Muir’s only outside interest.<sup>133</sup> Dr. Strentzel’s outside activities centered largely around the Grange and other horticultural societies. He was a member of the Pennsylvania and of the Massachusetts horticultural societies. At the fair in 1873, Dr. Strentzel had won nearly all the prizes given for fruit, wines, and jellies, amounting to almost one hundred dollars in premiums.<sup>134</sup> His medical practice seems to have remained small.

Both Mrs. Strentzel and Louie were fond of embroidery and other handwork. With satisfaction Mrs. Strentzel recorded in her diary that she had finished a quilt of 265 pieces that had required twenty years to complete.<sup>135</sup> Mrs. Strentzel won prizes in local fairs for her quilts, jams, and flower arrangements. Louie, too, won prizes for floral arrangements, as well as for drawing and sewing.<sup>136</sup> Louie Muir’s chief interests were musical, although she also had an interest in astronomy. Concerned about the affairs of her day, she read both the *Review Magazine* and *World Work*.<sup>137</sup> Whatever leisure time she found away from her household tasks and raising the children, she devoted to managing the affairs of the ranch and preparing picnics for the girls.

Both Wanda and Helen liked to hike and go on camping trips with their father, and both girls inherited some of their mother’s musical ability. Wanda played the violin, and Helen played the guitar. A favorite cat roamed the house, and outdoors there were pet dogs and horses. Helen, particularly, was interested in railroading and collected magazines on the subject. Wanda attended the University **[of California]** and joined the Gamma Phi Beta sorority. Probably some of her school mementos, like those John Muir brought home from his frequent trips, remained in the house after her marriage.

In 1881, the telephone line between Martinez and Walnut Creek was completed, and sometime after this the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company installed a telephone in the house.<sup>138</sup> Its exact location is not known.

130 Notes at JMNHS, entry for November 9, 1869.

131 The originals of these portraits are now in the [Martinez branch of the] Contra Costa County Library.

**132 “Yosemite” is painted on a cigar box lid.**

133 Helen Muir to Mr. Watkin, September 30, 1954, JMNHS.

134 Diary of Mrs. Strentzel, entry of September 1, 1873, notes at JMNHS.

135 Diary of Mrs. Strentzel, entry of March 12, 1877, notes at JMNHS.

136 *Contra Costa Gazette*, *passim*.

137 Letter from Helen Muir, July 26, 1963, JMNHS.

138 Bill from the Sunset Company, 1891, JMNHS.

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# Hall

## 42 Furnishings

According to Muir's daughter, Helen: "The house was built with a hall running through from north to south, a door at [the] south end shutting off doors to cellar and lavatories etc. and all rooms (parlors and dining room) opened from this hall."<sup>139</sup> Helen Muir recalled in 1957 that during the time her grandparents lived in the house, both the downstairs and upstairs halls were carpeted in wall-to-wall dark green carpet with a small design, matching the carpet in the East Parlor.<sup>140</sup>

After the 1906 earthquake, Muir replaced the "narrow doors" and transom windows on either side of the hallway leading into the East and West Parlors with "large archways." Helen later wrote: "There were very heavy velour drapes at each archway." Helen received one pair of the "moss green" portieres before her father's death, and did not know how her sister Wanda had disposed of the remaining portieres.<sup>141</sup>

Helen also wrote that at this time her father "discarded all the original wall-to-wall carpeting in the downstairs rooms," which may have included the hall. He then bought new green rugs.<sup>142</sup>

Helen also recalled that the newel post at the bottom of the stairs was "flat on top," and that "a candle was kept on a high stand at [the] foot of [the] stairs."<sup>143</sup>

Before his death in December 1914, Muir had the floors painted "both upstairs and downstairs" and had "good matting" laid in the hallways. At the same time, Muir installed new portieres in one or both of the openings to the parlors east and west of the hall in place of the ones Helen had.<sup>144</sup>

## Finishes

In 1892 Louie Muir hired G. W. Clark and Co. in San Francisco to wallpaper and paint eight rooms in the house. A "felt" or flocked wallpaper and a "stock," or ceiling, paper were installed in the hall, along with a frieze paper.<sup>145</sup> "Stock" paper was a term used during the period to refer to a paper that was less expensive than wallpaper, often with an indeterminate pattern.<sup>146</sup>

139 "Desired Information on Muir Manor," received from Helen Muir, April 2, 1957, John Muir National Historic Site. (Hereafter "HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.")

140 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

141 Helen Muir (hereafter "HM") to Hattie Joost, March 30, 1958, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; HM, April 2, 1957, and HM to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS. See also HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 7.

142 HM to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS.

143 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

144 John Muir (hereafter "JM") to HM, December 3, 1914 in William Edward Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

145 G. W. Clark and Co. invoice, July 27, 1892, JMNHS collection.

146 Argine Carter, Carter & Co., conversation with author, May 3, 2004.



Analysis of a small sample of wallpaper located in the hall and of work done to the walls in the first-floor hall indicates that a green “oatmeal” or “ingrain” paper was installed in 1906, replacing the flocked paper and the frieze installed in 1892. The oatmeal paper matched the paper installed in Muir’s bedroom.<sup>147</sup> In 1958 Helen Muir recalled tan wallpaper in the hall and carpet on the stairs.<sup>148</sup>

Three doors are located in the hall. One leads from the hall to the Dining Room, one from the hall to the back hall and Kitchen, and one that formerly led to a bathroom between the Dining Room and the East Parlor now opens directly into the East Parlor. Finishes analysis indicates that the doors were grained during the Muir period. The door between the hall and the East Parlor may retain its original finish.<sup>149</sup>

Finishes on the woodwork in the entry vestibule and the front door are the original wood graining applied when the house was built in 1882. According to the 2003 HSR, it is likely that the floor in the vestibule was stained and/or varnished during the Muir period.<sup>150</sup>

According to the 2003 draft historic structures report, “extensive plaster work” was done in conjunction with the installation of the archways in the hall after the 1906 earthquake.

### List of Recommended Furnishings

The following furnishings plan provides for evidence-based treatment of floors and walls in the hallway, and retention of select furnishings appropriate to the period. The donation box and small table currently in the hall should be removed, as they are non-historic. The fire extinguisher should be relocated if feasible. The existing lighting fixture should be removed, as there is no physical evidence or other documentation to indicate that an overhead fixture was used in the hall.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Wallpaper</b> , green, ingrain (in first- and second-floor hallways and up stairwell)	Physical evidence (See HSR, 7–9.) 1892 invoice	Acquire paper with faint pattern, or paint with textured paint.
<b>Ceiling paper</b> , muted pattern (on first- and second-floor ceilings)	1892 invoice	Acquire paper and install.
<b>Matting</b> , woven sea grass (on floor and stairs)	John Muir (JM) to Helen Muir (HM), December 3, 1914	Use matting in place.
<b>Hall stand</b> , painted and stained, with seat, full-length mirror, eight hat hooks, and attached umbrella stands (on east wall, south of door to East Parlor)	Common usage	Use catalog #14, in place.
<b>Telephone</b> , wall-mounted (on east wall, between arch and door to East Parlor)	Bill from the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1891, JMNHS	Use catalog #475, in place.
<b>Candle stand</b> (at foot of stairs)	HM recalled a “high stand” at the foot of the stairs. “Desired Information on Muir Manor,” received from Helen Muir, April 2, 1957 [HM, April 2, 1957]	Acquire.
<b>Candlestick</b> , with candle (on candle stand)	HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire.

147 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 7–9.

148 Notes from conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS collection.

149 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 7–9.

150 *Ibid.*, 6–7.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Umbrella</b> , black, men's (in umbrella stand)	Common usage with hall stand	Acquire reproduction.
<b>Parasol</b> (in umbrella stand)	Common usage with hall stand	Acquire reproduction.
<b>Doormats</b> , two, cocoa fiber (inside front door in foyer and outside front door)	Figure 5 (JM, HM & LM on porch)	Acquire.

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# West Parlor

## Furnishings

Helen Muir recalled that prior to the 1906 earthquake, the West Parlor was carpeted in a wall-to-wall carpet with a “thick heavy pile.” The design was “white with [a] large rose-colored flower design.” After the earthquake, her father removed the old carpeting on the first floor and replaced it with new green rugs.<sup>151</sup> She later recalled a Brussels rug that was “dark green with [a] tiny pattern.”<sup>152</sup>

The bay window was dressed in “heavy lace curtains” that were starched and hung from a “gilded curtain rod” to the floor. Helen also recalled shutters in both the East and West Parlors.<sup>153</sup> Shutters are visible in figure 3, which shows the exterior of the bay window in the West Parlor in 1901. Figure 7 shows a glimpse of a light-colored window treatment, probably the lace curtains, in the bay window. When Muir cut the archway from the West Parlor to the Hall after the 1906 earthquake, he installed “heavy moss-green velour drapes (portieres)” in the opening.<sup>154</sup> In later years Helen remembered gilt molding in the room.<sup>155</sup>

A handsome white onyx mantel and surround was located on the west wall of the parlor, surmounted by a gilt framed “mantel to ceiling mirror.” There were brass andirons in the fireplace, and a candelabrum on the mantel reflected in the mirror.<sup>156</sup> In later years the fireplace was vandalized and the mirror stolen. The mirror is shown in a 1938 wedding photograph taken in the West Parlor (see figure 26). Subsequent owners Faire and Henry Sax restored most of the mantel and surround, and the restoration was completed by the NPS in 1974.<sup>157</sup>

Louie Muir’s Steinway grand piano from San Francisco was located in the West Parlor, along with her music stand.<sup>158</sup> The piano has passed into the hands of Bill Hanna, Muir’s great grandson. The Knabe rosewood piano currently in the West Parlor has a Martinez provenance.

Paintings hanging in the West Parlor included a large painting of Muir Glacier and a small picture of Yosemite by Thomas Hill, in addition to portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Strentzel by William Keith. Keith’s paintings “Monterey Point in a Storm,” and “Yosemite Falls” also hung in the room.<sup>159</sup> A 1910 visitor to Muir’s home recalled:

151 HM, April 2, 1957, and HM to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS.

152 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

153 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

154 HM to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS.

155 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

156 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

157 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 9. See also transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1964 in JMNHS.

158 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

159 Ibid.

Mr. Muir's first act of hospitality was to show me his collection of paintings, of which there were many on the walls of the spacious rooms, one a very striking picture by Hill of the Muir glacier, the effect of which was heightened by its reflection in the great mirror over the fireplace. The others were mainly mountain scenes, many of them by his friend, William Keith.<sup>160</sup>

In a 1962 interview, Helen Muir stated that the "West parlor mirror ceiling to mantel reflected the Keith Shasta painting on the opposite wall."<sup>161</sup> In 1958, Helen Muir commented that the large painting of Muir Glacier was in Saint Mary's, Santa Clara [*sic*].<sup>162</sup> The original portraits are now located in the Martinez City Library. Keith's "Mount Shasta" and Hill's "Muir Glacier" have been reproduced and hang in the West Parlor. At least some of the Muir/Hanna grandchildren received at least one Keith painting from their parents. Several family members have since sold or donated their paintings.

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Helen was only five years old when her grandfather died in 1890, and she did not remember the parlor furnishings when she moved into the house immediately after his death. She later recalled two sofas with matching arm and straight chairs, a marble-top table, and a small stand in the room during a later period. The parlor furnishings were recovered twice during the 1890–1907 period when she lived in the house. She commented that the furnishings were "plain but comfortable and suited the rooms."<sup>163</sup> In 1958 she mentioned two sofas and chairs that were in the room, as well as a black horsehair parlor set. She also recalled a 15-inch-tall gilt candelabra with three upturned arms on the mantel.<sup>164</sup>

See Appendix A for the text of the 1982 historic furnishings report, which provides a full description of original furnishings held by the family at that time.

## Finishes

When the house was built in 1882, the walls were left unfinished. In July 1892 the Muirs papered much of the house, including the West Parlor which was finished with a "granite" paper and 48 feet of moulding.<sup>165</sup> Helen noted that when the walls were papered, the woodwork was "painted to match." She also remembered "gilt moldings" in both the East and West Parlors.<sup>166</sup> The walls were probably repapered after they were plastered and repaired following the 1906 earthquake, but all evidence of Muir-era finishes were removed by the time the National Park Service acquired the house.<sup>167</sup>

## List of Recommended Furnishings

Furnishings in this room are limited to period-appropriate wall, floor, and window treatments. Paintings by Keith and Hill are documented to the room, and framed reproduction paintings on display in the room should be retained. The piano currently on display in the parlor, while not the one owned by Louie Strentzel, will be retained as it has a Martinez provenance and is used in interpretive programming.

160 "A Visit to John Muir's home in 1910," in "Program John Muir Day, Golden Gate International Exposition, April 22, 1939," John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.

161 HM interview, July 1962, transcript in JMNHS.

162 HM to Hattie Joost, March 30, 1958, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

163 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

164 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

165 G. W. Clark and Co. invoice, July 27, 1892, JMNHS.

166 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

167 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 10.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Wallpaper</b> , in c. 1906 pattern (West Parlor walls)	HSR, 10-11 HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire and install reproduction c. 1906 wallpaper. Remove ceiling paper and paint ceiling and ceiling medallion. Retain gilded molding and curtain pole supports.
<b>Carpet</b> , wall-to-wall, green (on floor)	HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire and install reproduction c. 1906 green carpet.
<b>Lighting fixture</b> , gas (from center medallion)	Common practice The house was not wired for electricity until 1912.	Acquire and install electrified period fixture.
<b>Curtains</b> , white lace, three panels (on bay window)	Figure 7; HM, April 2, 1957 HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS	Hang existing curtains on "gilded curtain rod."
<b>Curtains</b> , white lace, one pair (on west window)	HM, April 2, 1957. HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS	Use existing or acquire.
<b>Portieres</b> , moss green velour, one pair (across archway)	HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964	Reproduce velour portieres. Acquire and install wooden portiere rod and curtain rings.
<b>Piano</b> , Steinway baby grand (in southeast corner)	HM, April 2, 1957	Substitute catalog #23, rosewood Knabe brand piano and bench in park collection.
<b>Mirror</b> , gilt-framed (over fireplace)	Figure 26; HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire.
<b>Portraits</b> of Mr. and Mrs. Strentzel, by William Keith (north end of room)	HM, April 2, 1957 HFR, p. 62	Reproduce original portraits and frames.
<b>Painting</b> , "Mount Shasta," by William Keith (on east wall, across from mirror over fireplace)	HM interview, July 1962, in HFR, p. 62	Use reproduction in collection.
<b>Painting</b> , "Muir Glacier," by Thomas Hill (on west wall)	HM, April 2, 1957. "In the beautiful drawing-room where he entertained the Salvationists, is a large painting (by Artist Hill) of the grand Alaskan glacier named after him . . ." Undated issue of <i>War Cry</i> (newsletter of the Salvation Army), c. 1903	Use reproduction in collection.

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## Related Media

### *Concepts for Exhibit: Muir Comes to Martinez*

- Explain that it was the Strentzel family that brought Muir to Martinez – first as a friend and correspondent to the Strentzels and their daughter, and later as a suitor to Louie Strentzel.
- Note relationship during Muir's 1879 Alaska trip and describe wedding. Use quotes from Alaska letters to family and Louie.
- Outline Muir's involvement in Strentzel family ranching business

### *Possible objects*

- Louie Strentzel Muir's wedding dress (catalog #1714). Reproduce and exhibit.
- Louie Strentzel's bridal accessories: wedding shoes (catalog #1715-1716), lace shawl (catalog #1717), fan (catalog #1718). Exhibit one accessory at a time on a rotating basis.
- Silver cake stand or other wedding gifts.

*Panel: Louie Strentzel's Piano*

- Discuss Louie Strentzel's musical training and love of music.
- Note Wanda and Helen's involvement in music.
- Explain history of piano currently in room.

*Possible illustrations*

- Photograph of original piano in family
- Catalog illustration of Steinway baby grand of period
- Cover of published piano score Louie may have played

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# Library

## Furnishings

Located directly south of the West Parlor, the paneled Library was clearly designed for use by Dr. Strentzel. His office, used infrequently for medical practice, was located in an adjacent room on the west side of the house. Helen Muir recalled “leather covered chairs and sofas” made of “dark wood” in the Library. She also mentioned that the “book cases and tables also [were] dark wood like walnut.” Apparently referring to the furniture in the Library and throughout the house she noted: “There was no period furniture. Everything was plain but comfortable and suited the rooms.”<sup>168</sup>

Windows were covered with shutters, which remain in the room. No mention is made of fabric window coverings or of window shades. Helen did not remember what was on the floor when she moved into the house in 1890, but recalled that a large rug was in the room later.<sup>169</sup>

Four original prints and certificates are currently located in the room, and these should be retained: the framed prints of Albert Bierstadt’s “Heart of Rocky Mountains,” Frederic Church’s “Heart of the Andes,” and framed certificates of membership from the Pennsylvania and Massachusetts Horticulture Societies and a Polish Revolution Certificate, all originally owned by the Strentzels.<sup>170</sup>

Helen Muir recalled a curio cabinet located on a stand in the corner of the room, which contained Mrs. Strentzel’s collection of rocks.<sup>171</sup>

See Appendix B for the 1971/1982 HFR documentation of family furnishings possibly used in this room.

## Finishes

In 1957, Helen Muir described “two tone panelling [*sic*]” in the Library.<sup>172</sup> According to the 2003 draft historic structures report, the paneling is constructed of alternating panels of varnished heartwood and sapwood redwood.<sup>173</sup>

## List of Recommended Furnishings

Furnishings in the Library are limited to period-appropriate floor and window treatments and a few original objects documented to the room. The original interior window shutters are in place, although replacement

168 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS

169 Ibid.

170 The Muir family donated these objects to the park. The certificates bear Dr. Strentzel’s name.

171 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

172 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

173 HSR, 13.

hinges are needed for some of the shutters. Framed prints and certificates believed to be original to the room should be retained.

The glass-topped bookcase currently exhibited in the room is believed to be original to the site. Henry and Faire Sax bought Dr. Strentzel’s bookcase from “the man who had lived in the Adobe [on the property] for a number of years.” He sold it to them when he moved, and they believed it was the piece referred to as “the great bookcase” by Helen Muir. The Saxes were unclear whether the bookcase was located in the Library or in Dr. Strentzel’s office during Muir’s time.<sup>174</sup>

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
50 <b>Carpet</b> , area, 11’ 8” X 8’ 11”, Wilton or Brussels style, c. 1890–1910 (on floor)	HM, April 2, 1957	Use carpet in place.
<b>Print</b> , framed, Albert Bierstadt, “Rocky Mountains” (on east wall)	Owned by family	Catalog #1382
<b>Print</b> , framed, Frederic Church, “Heart of the Andes” (on east wall)	Owned by family	Catalog #1383
<b>Certificate</b> , framed, Polish organization (on east wall)	Owned by family	Catalog #1928
<b>Certificate</b> , framed, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (on east wall)	Owned by family	Catalog # 1927
<b>Bookcase</b> , glazed top, with books (south wall)	Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967	Catalog #9 Use books in collection currently in bookcase.
<b>Lighting fixture</b> , gas (suspended from center of ceiling)	Physical evidence	Acquire and install electrified period fixture.

**Related Media**

*Concepts for Exhibits: Background on the Strentzel Family*

- Discuss Dr. and Mrs. Strentzel’s family background and Dr. Strentzel’s early medical practice.
- Describe Strentzel family business concerns such as fruit ranching and farming and their influence on the surrounding community.
- Explore the Strentzel family’s civic involvement.

*Panel: Dr. Strentzel’s Office*

- Explain use of office.
- Provide any additional information regarding practice.

174 Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.



# Dr. Strentzel's Office

No new evidence for this room has been located for this report. The following boxed text is quoted directly from the 1971/1982 historic furnishings report. New material appears in brackets and sans serif boldface within the box.

Although a portion of the west porch was enclosed to make an office for Dr. Strentzel, there is little evidence that he conducted an extensive medical practice by the 1880s. Deeply involved in his cattle and fruit-raising operations, his practice probably was limited to treating neighboring families, friends, and the workmen on his ranch.

Descriptions of this room are scanty. Helen Muir provided only the sketchiest information. She noted that when the house was built all the walls were plastered with the “exception of Dr. Strentzel’s office . . . which was painted wood finish.”<sup>175</sup> The only other furnishing she remembered was a great bookcase in the room.<sup>176</sup>

A list of medicines that Dr. Strentzel purchased in 1849 from Look & Rose has survived. The supplies he then used to treat his patients included:

Calomel	Coiffor gum
Rhubarb	Castor oil
Jalopa	Oil of cinimon [ <i>sic</i> ]
Aloe	Oil of cloves
Magrina	Oil of anise
Minat ammonia	Oil of peppermint
Cream tart[ar]	Vials
Gum opium	Tinct bottle
Sulphuric acid	Squille
Muriatic acid	Corid lime
Blue moss & ergot	Ontheradic
Coppers	Alum
Balsour	Alcohol
Nutmeg	Labella seed
Calchicum	Quinine
Cubels	Petroleum

<sup>175</sup> HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

<sup>176</sup> Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

Cark-ammon  
Bicarb, soda  
Salt  
Tartanic acid  
Fine paper<sup>177</sup>

Wet silver  
Borax  
Pill boxes  
Sulphur histimon

The total cost of his supplies was \$77.70, not an inconsiderable sum of money at that period. Presumably, in the 1880s, Dr. Strentzel still was using many of these same medicines in his office. Possibly the bookcase in the room was used to store his drugs conveniently at hand.

52 After Dr. Strentzel's death, this room seems to have been little used, and there is no mention that it was utilized for other purposes.

177 Copy in file, JMNHS.

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# Kitchen

## Furnishings

The Kitchen is located on the south end of the house, east of the center hall, and directly behind the Dining Room. A storage pantry is built in the southwest corner of the room, and a service pantry is positioned between the Kitchen and the Dining Room. Little is known about furnishings in this room, other than that it contained a large coal and wood-burning stove, still in place against the south wall. The stove was manufactured by J. G. Uhls and Company of San Francisco and was installed when the house was built in 1882.<sup>178</sup>

The original sink was positioned on the east wall. Former owners Henry and Faire Sax located the original sink, and parts of the original scalding tray and drain board after they moved into the house in 1955.<sup>179</sup>

In early 1902, Helen noted in her diary that upon hearing a train whistle in the evening, she: “went and stood in the open [kitchen] door with the candle behind me on the stove to watch it pass . . .”<sup>180</sup> Helen later told the Saxes that the Chinese cook used a lantern in the Kitchen, in addition to a lamp on the wall.<sup>181</sup>

An “old dinner bell” was mounted at the west Kitchen door, which Wanda Muir used to ring in the new year in 1902.<sup>182</sup>

A soapstone table top mounted on a park-constructed base currently serves as a work table in the Kitchen. The top is believed to be original to the site. In 1958 Helen Muir recalled a “black marble-topped table” near the stove and hand pump by the wall “close to the cistern.”<sup>183</sup> The cistern would have been located in the room behind the stove.

A visitor to the Muir home in 1907 described his impression of the Kitchen some years later: “The kitchen was an ample and adequate workshop, with sufficient equipment. It did not overwhelm one by the number and variety of the mechanized appliances of the more abundant life, but it was a pleasant place in which to provide a good plain old-time meal.”<sup>184</sup>

The Cook’s Room was located behind the Kitchen, and was part of the addition Muir built on in the 1890s. Helen Muir recalled that this room was used for the help.<sup>185</sup> According to former owner Faire Sax the room

178 Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

179 Ibid.

180 HM Diary, entry for January 23, 1902, JMNHS.

181 Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

182 HM Diary, entry for January 1, 1902, JMNHS.

183 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

184 J. E. Calkins, “A visit to John Muir’s home 1907,” undated typed manuscript, c. 1940, John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.

185 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958.

was also used for fruit storage during the Muir era. No original finishes survive in this area.<sup>186</sup> As part of the furnishings project, this room should be stabilized but not furnished.

## Finishes

The Kitchen was extensively remodeled after the Muir family occupancy. The first layer of paint is a medium brown, which may date from the Muir period. The HSR points out, however, that calcimine was a commonly used wall finish for kitchens of this period, and concludes that it is “unlikely” that Muir finishes remain on the walls or ceiling.<sup>187</sup>

Traces of oak graining on wood trim and wainscoting in the Kitchen and pantry are attributed to the Muir period. The original wood flooring was probably stained and varnished, and has been returned to its earlier appearance by the NPS.<sup>188</sup> According to the Saxes, the original wood flooring was replaced before they bought the house in 1955. They believed that the original wood floor was damaged by sand put down by the Chinese cook – at John Muir’s request – to absorb cooking grease and spills.<sup>189</sup>

## List of Recommended Furnishings

The Kitchen will be furnished to illustrate fruit preservation during the period before Mrs. Strentzel’s death in 1897. The furnished Kitchen will provide an opportunity to discuss the personal interests of both Louie Muir and her mother, who won prizes for her preserves.<sup>190</sup> Interpreters can also discuss the size and scope of the Muir/Strentzel fruit ranching interests in this area.

No documentation of Kitchen furnishings survives for this or any period. However, park staff have determined that it is important to furnish the Kitchen in order to introduce the idea that the Muir family was supported at home and in their business by domestic and ranch workers. In the furnished Kitchen, interpreters can point out that the day-to-day responsibility for this area usually fell to a Chinese cook. A moveable interpretive panel will discuss the cook and his living quarters, which were located directly south of the Kitchen.

The Kitchen will be the only fully furnished interior on the first floor, and its inclusion will allow visitors unable to access the second floor to experience this interpretive medium. The park requests that this furnishings installation be planned without a barrier, as the installation of barriers would interfere with access to the lift outside the Kitchen door, and with a fire exit from the second floor. A modern carpet runner should be installed to suggest a visitor pathway. After furnishings are installed in the Kitchen, park staff can assess damage and loss to period and reproduction furnishings and determine whether this policy should be reevaluated.

The existing wooden gate across the storage pantry door should be removed, and a clear barrier installed across the doorway to prevent removal of objects in the pantry, and as a maintenance precaution. Signage should be removed from the east exterior door and the south door to the cook’s room.

Exhibit lighting is provided only by windows and an electrified fluid lamp recommended for the west wall. Park staff may want to consider supplemental exhibit lighting for this space.

186 HSR, phase I, March 2003, 17. See also Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

187 HSR, phase I, March 2003, 14–16.

188 Ibid.

189 Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

190 *Contra Costa Gazette*, passim, in HFR, 53.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Table</b> , soapstone top with wooden base (against north wall between doors)	Table top is believed to be original to site, although documentation was not located for this report.	Retain top and park-made base, catalog #79.
<b>Bowl</b> , ceramic, yellow striped (on table)	For fruit preparation	Use catalog #1081.
<b>Kettle</b> , preserving, 3 to 8 quart (on table)	Figure 40 For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Ladle</b> , aluminum or agateware (on table)	Figure 40 For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Jars</b> , canning, quart, six, with rings and lids (on table)	Figure 40 For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Bag of sugar, or canister</b> (on table)	For fruit preparation	Reproduce bag of sugar or acquire canister.
<b>Dish towel</b> , cotton (on table)	For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Pan</b> , square or rectangular, tin or aluminum (on table)	For fruit preparation	Use catalog #98, #91, or #75, or acquire.
<b>Basket</b> , with reproduction grapes (next to table)	For fruit preparation	Acquire period or reproduction basket and reproduction fruit.
<b>Sink</b> , double wooden drain board with wooden legs (against east wall)	Common usage	Reproduced by park from evidence
<b>Lamp</b> , wall-mounted (near sink)	Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, John Muir NHS files	Acquire period lamp and electrify.
<b>Colander</b> , tin or agateware (on left drain board)	Used to wash fruit	Acquire.
<b>Spoons</b> , two, wooden and aluminum (on left drain board)	For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Mixing bowls</b> , two, yellow (on left drain board)	For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Cutting board</b> , wood (on left drain board)	For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Jelly bag</b> (on left drain board)	For jelly preparation	Reproduce.
<b>Pot scrubber</b> , chain (on drain board)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Dishpan</b> , tin or agate ware (in sink)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Soap dish</b> , white ironstone, and soap (on sink)	Common usage	Acquire period dish and bar of soap.
<b>Dish cloth</b> , woven (on sink)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Garbage pail</b> , tin, aluminum or enameled, with lid (under sink)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Shelf</b> , with hooks (mounted on south wall east of stove)	Common usage	Use shelf in collection and replace hooks, or replace shelf.
<b>Hat</b> , woven, Chinese (hanging on shelf)	Used by the Chinese cook who worked for the Muirs	Use uncataloged hat in collection.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Oil lamp</b> , glass (on shelf)	Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, John Muir NHS files	Use glass base catalog #25 with replacement chimney.
<b>Lantern</b> , tubular or barn style, with reflector (on shelf)	Common usage	Use catalog #296.
<b>Candlesticks</b> , two, with candles (on shelf)	The Muirs used candles as lighting.	Acquire period candlesticks and new candles.
<b>Stove lid lifter</b> (hanging from shelf hook)	Used with stove	Acquire.
<b>Coal hod</b> (on floor next to stove)	Used with stove	Use catalog #299.
<b>Tea kettle</b> , iron, copper or tin (on stove)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Coffee pot</b> , agate ware or tin (on stove)	Common usage John Muir is known to have drunk coffee.	Acquire.
<b>Kettle</b> , preserving, 3- to 8-quart (on stove)	Figures 39 and 40. For fruit preparation	Acquire.
<b>Coffee grinder</b> (on brick stove surround)	Common usage. John Muir is known to have drunk coffee.	Use catalog # 326.
<b>Oil cloth</b> , plain or marbled (lining pantry shelves)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Bottles</b> , ceramic, for beer or ale, seven (stored together on rear pantry shelf)	Common usage	Use catalog #795; # 801; #802; #803; #347; #1215; and #1320 (broken).
<b>Wine bottles</b> , two (stored together on rear pantry shelf)	Common usage Dr. Strentzel made wine.	Use catalog #804 and #806.
<b>Food packaging</b> , to include: coffee, oatmeal or other cereals, spices, extracts, flour, sugar, canned goods, biscuits or crackers (in pantry)	Common usage	Use reproductions.
<b>Table</b> , drop-leaf (west side of stove or against west wall)	Extra work tables were commonly used in kitchens.	Use catalog #719.
<b>Chair</b> , cane bottom (at table)	Common usage	Use catalog #929.
<b>Carpet runner</b> , brown, and pad (from hall door to service pantry door)	To delineate visitor pathway	Acquire runner and pad.

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### Related Media

Position panel in the doorway to the Cook's Room leading from the Kitchen.

*Panel: Ah Fong, Muir Family Cook*

- Discuss Muir family domestic help; note that the cook lived in the room behind the Kitchen.
- Discuss importance of immigrant workers throughout Alhambra Valley.

*Illustration:*

Photograph of Ah Fong in park collection

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# Dining Room

## Furnishings

The Dining Room is located on the east side of the house, between the East Parlor and the serving pantry north of the Kitchen. A second pantry, used to store china, cutlery, and linens, is located west of the serving pantry, also between the Dining Room and Kitchen. Helen Muir recalled “a large pantry where china, etc. was kept – also [a] swinging door into another pantry (for food) between the dining room and kitchen.”<sup>191</sup> The pass-through pantry was called the “bread pantry” according to Mrs. Sax, and it contained a set of built-in shelves and a counter under the east window where the cook could mix bread and prepare his baking. Sometime before the Saxes moved into the house in 1955, the shelves were removed from the pantry and reinstalled in the second floor bathroom.<sup>192</sup>

After the 1906 earthquake, Muir “cut an archway into the Dining Room from the living room [or East Parlor.]”<sup>193</sup> He also removed the bathroom between the East Parlor and the Dining Room. Helen Muir remembered that this new archway and the two new archways cut between the parlors and the Hall were “hung with heavy green drapes” at this time.<sup>194</sup>

In 1902 the chimney for the fireplace located in the northeast corner of the room caught fire and Muir, Helen, and servant Ah Sun put it out.<sup>195</sup> The chimney was damaged again later during the 1906 earthquake, and Muir closed off the flue. The white marble mantel and surround to the fireplace was removed in 1938 by the Kriess family, who installed a storage closet in the fireplace opening.<sup>196</sup>

The fireplace was a focal point of the room when it was operational. Helen wrote of sitting “alone in the dining room in my rocking chair” reading, with her feet on the fender in late 1901.<sup>197</sup> On New Year’s Day 1902, guests to the Muir household sat around the fireplace “gossiping” after dinner.<sup>198</sup>

The dining table in the room was generous, and Helen noted in her diary that after the New Year’s dinner “there was [*sic*] 11 people around the table by 1.35 p.m.”<sup>199</sup> Later the same week Helen studied at the table, although keeping a reading book “under cover of the table cloth.”<sup>200</sup> She later recalled “a large many leafed

191 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

192 Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

193 HM to Hattie Joost, March 30, 1958, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

194 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

195 HM Diary, entry for March 25, 1902, JMNHS.

196 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 18.

197 HM Diary, entry for November 25, 1901, JMNHS.

198 HM Diary, entry for January 1, 1902, JMNHS.

199 Ibid.

200 HM Diary, entry for January 5, 1902, JMNHS.

dining table in the Strentzel time and a heavy carved walnut sideboard.”<sup>201</sup> She mentioned that the table and chairs were “dark,” the table opened to seat 14 people, and that the chairs had cane bottoms.<sup>202</sup>

Muir’s daughters each inherited one of two sideboards original to the house. Wanda Muir’s daughter Jean Clark owned one of the sideboards originally used in the Dining Room, but as she was not born until after her grandfather’s death, she did not know where it was used in the room. Mrs. Clark described the mahogany piece that was passed on to her as “of a massive nature,” with glass at the top, shelves, and “an area for the silver, the linens and enough space for [a] complete set of 12 china and additional drawers besides the little cupboards for knick-knacks.” The bottom section had a “cocoa marble top.” See figures 36 and 37. The second sideboard was “more delicate” and in 1966 was owned by Mrs. Clark’s sister-in-law, Mrs. Robert Hanna.<sup>203</sup> See figure 38.

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When asked in 1957 about floor coverings in the room, Helen could not recall the original covering, but mentioned that “later” there was a “large rug” in the room. After the earthquake Muir removed all the old carpeting and laid new green rugs.<sup>204</sup>

Helen also remembered shutters, rather than curtains, on the two full-length windows in the room. The window was used as an entrance into the glassed-in Conservatory built on to the east side of the Dining Room.<sup>205</sup>

According to the Saxes, Helen Muir said that her father “disliked kerosene and wouldn’t allow it to be moved from room to room. They had to carry candles when they went from room to room but they did have two hanging fixtures, one in [the Dining Room] and one in her mother’s room.”<sup>206</sup> In a 1902 diary entry, Helen describes setting the dining room table and getting the “cantles [*sic*] all ready to light, by five o’clock.”<sup>207</sup> Based on Helen’s recollection, the Saxes installed a hanging kerosene light in the Dining Room

## Finishes

Helen Muir remembered that the Dining Room contained “two tone panelling” during the time her grandparents lived in the house.<sup>208</sup> In 1892, however, the Dining Room was papered with “felt” wallpaper and a frieze.<sup>209</sup> In the 1950s owners Faire and Henry Sax painted the walls moss green and the woodwork white, based on Helen’s recollection of the room color during her time in the house. They noted that prior to painting they soaked off layers of calcimine, “an endless job.”<sup>210</sup>

According to the 2003 draft HSR the Dining Room floor was covered in wall-to-wall carpet until 1906, when the carpet was removed and the floors were refinished, painted, and stained.<sup>211</sup>

## List of Recommended Furnishings

The Dining Room will serve as a setting for exhibits about the family and visitors to the house. Reproduction photographs of Muir at home and away are presented in albums for visitors to use. A period dining table and

201 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

202 Notes from conversations with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

203 Transcript of Jean Clark interview, June 1966, JMNHS.

204 HM, April 2, 1957 and Helen Muir to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS.

205 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

206 Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

207 HM Diary, March 5, 1902, JMNHS.

208 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

209 G. W. Clark and Co. invoice, July 27, 1892, JMNHS.

210 Interview with Faire and Henry Sax by J. Jensen, March 14, 1967 in HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 19.

211 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 22 and Appendix B9.



chairs should be installed in the room for use by visitors looking at the albums. The albums are an inexpensive way to introduce school groups and other visitors to the places Muir traveled and the people with whom he traveled. Visitors on self-guided tours could review the albums at their leisure.

Walls should be painted “moss green” with light trim, as determined by mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century owners Faire and Henry Sax, based on Helen Muir’s recollections. Floors should be finished to match the sample taken from the closet floor documented in the HSR.<sup>212</sup>

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Carpet</b> (in center of room)	HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire large period or reproduction carpet.
<b>Lighting fixture</b> , kerosene (ceiling)	Transcript of Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, John Muir NHS files	Install electrified reproduction or period overhead fixture based on physical evidence.
<b>Sideboard</b> , Eastlake, with marble top (west wall)	Transcript of Jean Clark interview, June 1966, John Muir NHS files	Use catalog #11.
<b>Table</b> , large enough to accommodate eight or 10 people (in center of room)	HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire sturdy period table for use by visitors.
<b>Chairs</b> , eight or 10 (at table)	HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire set of sturdy period chairs for use by visitors. Reupholster seats as necessary.

212 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 22.

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# Conservatory

60 The Conservatory is a small room located east of the Dining Room and accessed through exterior stairs on the north and a window into the Dining Room. Little is known about finishes in the room, since all original finishes have been removed.<sup>213</sup>

Helen Muir noted: “There was a full length window (not French doors) which was used as a door into a glass conservatory built on the east side of the dining room. The Strentzels kept it full of flowers and (plants?).”<sup>214</sup>

In 1967, former owner Henry Sax recalled: “The conservatory where they kept their plants had running water and also a trough around the outer edge to let the drainage run off the porch. The windows were all double-hung windows and fully glassed in; there are two frames left of the large one and two of the small ones that were in that room... Evidence from the outside of the house looks like [the conservatory] was an afterthought on the house and was placed on after they had designed the house in general, from the way that the wood is applied to it.”<sup>215</sup>

213 Ibid., 22–23.

214 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

215 Interview with Faire and Henry Sax by J. Jensen, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

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# East Parlor

## Furnishings

The East Parlor is located at the front of the house, with a north-facing bay window matching the window in the West Parlor. The HSR points out that this room was originally planned as a bedroom, and that an adjoining bathroom was built north of the Dining Room. A doorway on the west wall provided access to the Hall.

According to Helen Muir, in the 1880s the East Parlor was furnished with green patterned wall-to-wall carpet, which was also used in the first- and second-floor halls. Windows were hung with starched “heavy lace curtains hung from a gilded curtain rod,” as in the West Parlor. The fireplace on the east wall was made of plain white marble.<sup>216</sup> Note that Helen does not indicate whether this room was used as a ground-floor bedroom or as a parlor during the 1880s.

In 1890 Dr. Strentzel died and the Muir family moved into the house. At that point, Mrs. Strentzel moved her bedroom to the East Parlor and remained there until her death in 1897. Helen Muir writes:

From the time we moved into the house after my grandfather died, Grandma Strentzel used the room you call the east parlor as her bedroom. She was a large heavy lady and the stairs to the upstairs bedrooms were hard for her, so she had the room downstairs until her death. It was very different then from now. There was a clothes closet in one corner, and a large bathroom between it and the dining room. The fireplace and mantel then were dark marble, with a mirror with side brackets similar to the one in the library now. After Grandma’s death the bed and a large wardrobe were removed, other furniture added and the room was our “sitting room” – a name now as old fashioned as the house.<sup>217</sup>

In 1892 the Muirs installed wallpaper throughout the house. It is not known whether the East Parlor was papered at this time. The invoice lists the rooms to be papered as follows: “Mr. M’s Room, Wanda’s Room, Dining Room, Hall, Bed Room, Parlor, Bed Room, Bed Room.”<sup>218</sup> It is possible that the East Parlor is one of the Bed Rooms listed above or below the (west) parlor.

The East Parlor was damaged by the 1906 earthquake, and Muir made structural changes to the room at that time:

Plaster fell from the walls and the ceiling, and the fireplace was badly cracked. So when my father had the damage repaired he decided to make some changes. The bathroom was removed and the wide archway

216 HM, April 2, 1957 JMNHS.

217 HM to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS. In 1957 Helen Muir stated all the fireplaces were white marble, except for the dark one in the Library and the onyx fireplace in the West Parlor.

218 Invoice, G. W. Clark and Co, July 27, 1892, JMNHS.

cut between the sitting room and dining room and the two archways from sitting room and parlor from the hall. Formally [*sic*] there had been ordinary sized doors from the hall. The present fireplace of yellow brick was built then. [1906] <sup>219</sup>

Muir also changed the furnishings at this time, installing “very heavy moss-green velour drapes (portieres)” across the three archways. He also “discarded all the original wall to wall carpeting in the downstairs rooms and bought new rugs, also green.”<sup>220</sup> The two rugs were “lighter green” than the moss-green portieres.<sup>221</sup>

Muir himself was pleased with the changes he had made, writing about the house that “[I]n many respects it’s better than before.” He was especially happy with the new “tan brick” fireplace: “. . . I’ve built a big fireplace, almost suitable for mountaineers, into which I roll a jolly pair of logs two feet in diameter and pile a half dozen smaller ones between and back of them making fires that flame and roar and radiate sunny heat like those we built on the frosty Coyote Meadows above the canon [*sic*] of the Kern.”<sup>222</sup>

Soon after his renovations, a visitor to Muir’s home described “a little den of a room in the northeast corner downstairs, with a few easy chairs and a roomy fireplace with a good draught.” Muir’s Chinese servant “laid a fire of thick eucalyptus logs.”<sup>223</sup>

### Finishes

All finishes original to the East Parlor were removed prior to NPS ownership of the house. It is unclear whether or not the Muirs wallpapered this room when they installed paper in other parts of the house in 1892.

### List of Recommended Furnishings

Furnishings in the East Parlor are limited to period-appropriate wall, floor, and window treatments. The reproduction William Keith paintings currently in the room should be retained, as the originals hung in the house during Muir’s lifetime.

As no firm evidence about wall or ceiling finishes has survived, paint or paper walls with period treatment as necessary.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Paintings by William Keith:</b> “Cypress Point” (west wall) “Lambert Dome” or “Tuolumne Meadows” (east wall) “Yosemite Falls” (east wall) “Vernal Falls” (south wall)	Mary Muir Hand to Willis Hand, September 1897 (Vernal Falls); “A Visit to John Muir’s home in 1910,” in “Program John Muir Day, Golden Gate International Exposition, April 22, 1939” See also 1982 HFR, p. 52.	Use framed reproductions in place.
<b>Curtains</b> , white lace, three panels (on bay window)	HM, April 2, 1957 HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964	Hang existing curtains on “gilded curtain rod.”
<b>Curtains</b> , white lace, two pairs (on east windows)	HM, April 2, 1957 HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964	Acquire curtains and hardware, or use existing.

219 HM to Mrs. Sax, January 16, 1964, JMNHS.

220 Ibid.

221 Notes from conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

222 HM, April 2, 1957 and John Muir to Miss Mosgrove, January 17, 1907, copy in JMNHS.

223 J. E. Calkins, “A visit to John Muir’s home 1907,” undated manuscript c. 1940, in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Portieres</b> , moss-green velour, two pairs (across archways)	HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964	Reproduce velour portieres. Acquire and install two wooden portiere rods and curtain rings.
<b>Lighting fixture</b> , gas (hanging from center medallion)	Common practice The house was not wired for electricity until 1912.	Acquire and install simple electrified period fixture.
<b>Carpet</b> , green (on floor)	HM, April 2, 1957 HM to F. Sax, January 16, 1964	Use carpet in place.
<b>Andirons</b> , iron, base made from railroad track (fireplace)	Common usage	Use catalog #249 and #250.
<b>Fender screen</b> (fireplace)	Common usage	Use catalog #251.

### Related Media

Exhibits in this area continue the theme of Muir's work in the public arena and in the wilderness, which was introduced in the Dining Room. The national and international importance of his conservation work is emphasized and the significance of his travel and writings is explored.

#### *Concepts for Exhibits: Muir's Work*

- Muir and the natural world
- Muir and the conservation movement
- Muir's writing and influence
- Muir and the National Park system

#### *Possible objects:*

Herbarium, catalog #941

Globe, catalog #1747

Wooden spoon and fork, given to Muir by Alaskan Indians, catalog #257 and #258

Indian baskets, catalog #1401

Indian pots, catalog #1395 and #1396

Harpoons, catalog #1397 and #1394

Atlatl, collected by Muir, catalog #1398

Ceremonial object, collected by Muir, catalog #1400

Muir's saddle

Muir's binoculars

Muir's quill pen

#### *Panel: Muir's Fireplace*

Discuss effect of 1906 earthquake on Muir's home, Martinez, and the Alhambra Valley. Note Muir's pleasure in his "mountaineer" fireplace.

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# Second Floor Hall

## 64 Furnishings

In 1957, Helen Muir wrote that when the Strentzels were living in the house in the 1880s, the floor covering in both the first- and second-floor hallways was a dark green wall-to-wall carpet, which matched the carpeting in the East Parlor. Muir made changes to the first floor following the 1906 earthquake, when he removed “all the old carpeting” and laid new carpeting in the “downstairs rooms.”<sup>224</sup> It is likely that he removed the dark green carpeting on the second floor at this time, but no evidence has been located to indicate whether new floor covering was installed on the second floor.

Helen later recalled that the floors in the upstairs hall were painted, and that her grandmother had used matting on the floors.<sup>225</sup> Shortly before his death in December 1914, Muir wrote to Helen that he had “the floors both upstairs and downstairs painted, [and] good matting laid on the halls.”<sup>226</sup>

Helen Muir recalled that when her father had company in the “Scribble Den” – his second floor Study west of the hall – he brought in extra chairs from the hallway.<sup>227</sup> The summer before his death in 1914, Muir had “a lot of book shelves made in the hall” in hopes of getting his books arranged “in useful order.”<sup>228</sup> In 1979 Jose Figueredo, a former Muir employee, recalled that in 1914 the second-floor hall was lined with bookcases constructed of soft unfinished wood, similar to those used in Muir’s Study Annex to the west.<sup>229</sup>

## Finishes

According to the HSR, the amount of wallpaper ordered for the Hall in 1892 was sufficient to paper the ceilings and walls of both the first- and second-floor hallways. A frieze paper was also ordered for this area. It is likely that the wall and ceiling paper in the second floor Hall was replaced in 1906 when finishes changes were made throughout the house.<sup>230</sup>

Analysis of a small sample of wallpaper located in the first-floor Hall indicates that a green ingrain paper was installed in 1906, replacing the flocked paper and the frieze installed in 1892. This new paper matched the paper installed in Muir’s Bedroom.<sup>231</sup> (See Hall section, above.)

The doors in the second-floor Hall were originally grained, and all but one retain this treatment.<sup>232</sup>

224 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

225 Notes on HM conversation, June 1958, JMNHS.

226 JM to HM, December 3, 1914, William Edward Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California.

227 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

228 JM to HM, August 31, 1914, William Edward Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California.

229 Jose Figueredo interview, September 17, 1979, transcript in Appendix F, 1971/1982 HFR.

230 HSR, phase 1, March 2003, 25–27.

231 *Ibid.*, 7–9.

232 *Ibid.*, 27.

## List of Recommended Furnishings

Finishes in this area should be consistent with finishes in the first-floor hallway. Reproduction bookcases in place should be retained and filled with books appropriate to the period and to John Muir's library. See Appendix C, a list of books owned by John Muir.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Wallpaper</b> , green, ingrain (in first and second floor hallways and up stairwell)	Physical evidence See HSR, p. 7–9. 1892 invoice.	Acquire paper with faint pattern or paint with textured paint.
<b>Ceiling paper</b> , muted pattern (on first and second floor ceilings)	1892 invoice	Acquire paper and install.
<b>Matting</b> , woven sea grass (on floor and stairs)	JM to HM, December 3, 1914	Use matting in place.
<b>Bookcases</b> , three, unfinished pine (against wall)	JM to HM, August 31, 1914; Jose Figueredo interview	Use bookcases in place.
<b>Books</b> , to fill bookcases	JM to HM, August 31, 1914	Use books in place.
<b>Chairs</b> , three, dark wood vernacular dining room chairs (against wall)	HM, April 2, 1957	Use catalog #50 (Windsor style) and two other uncataloged chairs (reproduction Chippendale style.)
<b>Window shade</b> , green (installed in window)	Figure 7	Acquire shade and pull.
<b>Lighting fixture</b> , gas (ceiling)	Common practice The house was not wired for electricity until 1912.	Acquire simple electrified period fixture.

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# Scribble Den

66

## Furnishings

The 1971/1982 Historic Furnishings Report gives the following detailed account of Muir's Study, or "Scribble Den," at the north end of the second floor. Text from the 1971–1982 HFR is boxed. New material appears in brackets and sans serif boldface within the box.

No room in the house holds more interest or permits the character and personality of John Muir to be interpreted more than the second-floor northwest bedroom that Muir converted to his personal study shortly after he moved his wife and children into the Strentzel home. In this room (when not forced by a need for solitude to retreat to San Francisco hotels), he conceived, researched, and wrote the great volumes and articles on conservation that made him famous.

**[Muir described the room as "a regular palace of an attic, where I do my writing," and explained its appeal: "I have my books around me and the pictures I love best and God's great out-of-doors is just outside."<sup>233</sup> Helen Muir later said that her father "wouldn't have window curtains," and that he had glass transparencies in his Study window, "small ones of his trees."<sup>234</sup>]**

Fortunately, his daughter **[Helen]**, who was most familiar with the room, described the room upon two occasions. Samuel Merrill, a guest of the Muirs, gave his impression of the room to Linnie Marsh Wolfe to incorporate in her biography of John Muir. Lastly, John Muir, in several of his letters, mentioned minor details of the room. All of the descriptions are supplemented by and verified by **[six]** photographs taken inside the Study. In **[three]**, Muir is seated at his desk with his bookcases behind him, **[figures 42, 43, and 44]**, in another **[figure 41]** the southeast corner of the room is visible. **[A fifth portrait shows a section of a chair and a print on the wall (not reproduced in this report) and the fourth (figure 45) shows Muir seated in front of his bookcases.]** Of all the rooms in the house, this room is the best documented.

Samuel Merrill was invited to the Study for evening talks and left the following description of the clutter in the room:

He was allowed to have his own way in this particular room and no one dared to put it in order. It was so full of his books, manuscripts, and sketches that it was difficult to find a chair unoccupied.<sup>235</sup>

Muir himself commented on the confusion created by his papers, etc., and wrote a friend:

I've been reading old musty dusty Yosemite notes until I'm tired and blinky blind, trying to arrange them in something like lateral, medial, and terminal moraines on my den floor. I never imagined I had accumulated so vast a number. The long trains and embankments and heaped-up piles are truly appalling . . . I'm beginning

**233** *Riverside Daily Press*, January 21, 1911, cited in *John Muir: A Reading Biography* by William F. Kimes and Marjorie B. Kimes (Fresno, California: Panorama Books West, 1986).

**234** Notes from conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

**235** Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 256.



to see that I'll have to pick out only a moderate-sized bagful . . . and abandon the bulk of it to waste away like a snowbank or grow into other forms as time and chance may determine.<sup>236</sup>

Helen Muir confirmed the overcrowded state of the room but added, "It must have seemed jumbled to anybody else, but he knew the whereabouts of every article in it."<sup>237</sup> Since Helen had helped her father by typing his manuscripts **[in 1906–1907]**, the room made a deep and lasting impression on her mind. In 1957, the memory was still vivid enough for her to write the following detailed description:

John Muir's study contained 2 desks, both oak. One was a roll top used only to store notebooks, photographs, clippings, etc. Above it hung a large Keith painting of Mt. Rainier – this was on east side of room to the right as you entered **[the]** room. The rest of the east wall was taken up by high bookcases. A small Keith painting of Lyle fork *[sic]* Tuolumne Meadows stood on top of one. His "working desk" a flat topped one stood under **[the]** north windows. At each side of the desk, on the floor were piles of notebooks and magazines containing something he wanted to keep, articles of interest, etc. The entire west wall was covered by high bookcases, all in the room were glass doored. On top of the west wall case was a small Keith painting of Santa Barbara Mission, and a charcoal sketch of Wanda as a child. The balance of the west wall was taken up by the fireplace of white marble. Above it hung a very large Keith painting of oaks. The mantel was completely covered by small, gilt framed photographs of family and friends – dozens of them. Then there was the west window, and beginning the south wall was the alcove with built-in wash stand. Next the closet where my father kept his clothes etc. And on the shelves were parts of his famous wooden clock. The balance of the south wall of study was covered by a large Keith painting of Tuolumne Meadows, and colored prints of Grand Canyon. Below them were shelves filled with Sierra Club Bulletens *[sic]*, etc. Beside the door was a framed sketch of his desk at the University. On the floor was a large tan and brown rug. Linoleum was around edges to wall. In the middle of the room was a dark oak table about 3 feet square. On this stood his "student" lamp. Beside the table and in front of the fireplace was a large, heavy oak rocking chair with broad arm rests. Here my father sat when he was not working at his desk. On the other side of the small table which also held my typewriter, was a straight chair which I used when typing his letters and manuscripts the last year I lived there—Aug. 1906-December 1907—. When he had company extra chairs were brought in from the hall. In any remaining space in corners of the room there were various curios – African spears, piece of elephants tusk, petrified wood, etc.<sup>238</sup>

**[A visitor to the house shortly after Helen moved to the Mojave desert in 1907 also commented on the desk which had "a solid bank of drawers on each side. . . they were all packed full of the notebooks in which his years of Sierra adventure and observation and study had been recorded."<sup>239</sup> Helen emphasized that "the roll top was used only for his pictures, specimens, odds and ends he had picked up on his trips, and the drawers for photographs and notebooks."<sup>240</sup> The roll top desk, or secretary, was seven feet tall and had glazed shelves over the desk area. It is said to have been made in 1890 specifically for Muir.<sup>241</sup>]**

Mrs. Wolfe, who was in communication with Helen and received valuable information from her during the writing of her book, added a few details to the above description in her *Son of the Wilderness, the Life of John Muir*. The white marble fireplace always had a cheery blaze on cool evenings. The solid oak rocking chair, in which Muir sat

236 Ibid. See also JM to Katherine Putnam Hooker, December 17, 1910, in Katherine Hooker Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

237 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 256.

238 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

**239 Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907," John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

**240 HM to Linnie Marsh Wolfe, February 26, 1943, John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

**241 Ronald Limbaugh, Director, Holt-Atherton Pacific Center for Western Studies to Hiram Davis, Dean, University Libraries, April 16, 1985, John Muir NHS files.**

smoking his clay pipe through an eighteen-inch thistle stem garnered from the creek bed, had a sagging cane bottom. . . . At the left of Keith's painting, "The Oaks," was hung a pair of bleached goat's horns picked up on Muir Glacier, which Muir described as "some puir beastie a wolf had killed." His large library ensconced in the great bookcases, contained scientific tomes and the authors he loved best – Carlyle, Scott, Burns, Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Nansen, Charles Lamb, Emerson, and Thoreau, the last of whom he came in maturity to regard as the wisest of them all. Somewhere in the clutter of his room, he also kept a scrapbook in which he pasted articles by Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Alfred Russel Wallace.<sup>242</sup>

**[A visitor in 1910 commented on Keith's "The Oaks" in the Study: "Over the fireplace was a splendid canvas of Keith's favorite theme, live-oaks, with their characteristic background of light, conveying the artist's own message of optimism, in painting, answering to that of his friend Muir, in literature."<sup>243</sup>**

**Muir's pair of glazed bookcases was built for him in 1890 by Gumps in San Francisco. They are signed by Gumps' woodworkers on the back. Both bookcases were donated by the family to the University of the Pacific in the mid-1980s and are on display in the Holt-Atherton Reading Room.<sup>244</sup> Muir's family also donated more than 700 books from Muir's library to the University.**

**Visitors also remarked upon the open fire, which Muir used for cooking in his later years. One woman writer described "a reckless, open-hearted fire, thoroughly masculine" with five logs piled on at once and a "great powdery mass of ashes that must have been growing for days."<sup>245</sup> After Helen left home in 1907, Muir often cooked in the fireplace. He wrote to Helen in April 1908 that he was "pegging away here in my den practicing my old skill in cooking as well as scribbling."<sup>246</sup> By the end of the year, Muir had settled into a routine of eating lunch and supper with Wanda, who was living in the ranch adobe with husband Tom Hanna, and eating "[b]reakfast in my den."<sup>247</sup>**

**Katherine Hooker, an old friend, visited Muir at the house in the year before he died and described his use of the Study:**

**Sometimes he had laid in a stock of food and sometimes he had forgotten all simply material things. On arrival we went directly to his study, a square, well lighted room on the second floor, lined with books and papers and having a fire-place whose mantelpiece was covered with mineral specimens large and small. We would sit down before the fire and talk and presently he would cry, "Now we must have lunch," at which he opened a closet door and examined his pantry. On one occasion he exclaimed, "Dear me! I have been on a trip and only got back last night. There's very little here! Coffee?" he shook a paper bag, "why there is hardly a prairie [?] left – and bread?" he ruefully displayed some dry bits and pieces. "There is a little butter." So with the remaining coffee we made some cups of a beverage miserably weak, setting the coffee pot on the coals in the grate and lunched contentedly.**

<sup>242</sup> Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 276.

<sup>243</sup> "Program John Muir Day," in *John Muir Papers*, University of the Pacific.

<sup>244</sup> Ronald Limbaugh, Director, Holt-Atherton Pacific Center for Western Studies to Hiram Davis, Dean, University Libraries, April 16, 1985, John Muir NHS files.

<sup>245</sup> "Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir" by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, undated and unidentified newspaper article, *John Muir Papers*, University of the Pacific.

<sup>246</sup> JM toHM, April 22, 1908, William Edward Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>247</sup> JM to HM, December 8, 1908, William Edward Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

**When the afternoon waned and it was time for me to go he would stand up and glance around the room, looking for some little object to give me. On this particular day he snatched from among his minerals a charming piece of what looked like agate, shaped and polished, and pressed it into my hand. I thanked him warmly, but on the next visit I watched for a time when he left the room for a (end of manuscript)]<sup>248</sup>**

In one of **[Muir's]** last letters, he wrote to Helen saying, "From my den I have made a passage through into your room and lined the walls with shelving and made it into a library."<sup>249</sup> All of his books that were on the first floor had been carried upstairs, but moving them had been a hard job for the elderly man. According to Henry Sax. . . the last owner of the house, the old oak roll top desk was in the Strentzel **[family]** farmhouse as late as 1956. Mrs. Piel, who had possession of the desk, was unwilling to part with it, so the Saxes purchased another. The secretary owned by **[the Muir family]** does not match the cylinder-lid contours of those exposed in **[figure 41.]** The oak flat-top working desk that John Muir wrote upon **[was transferred to the park from Yosemite National Park in 1966.]**<sup>250</sup>

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A corner of the table Helen Muir described as being in the center of the room can be seen in **[figure 41.]** The table appears to date to about 1885–1910, and both the top and shelf below are cluttered. There is no table scarf, but what looks like a scarf is laid over an unidentifiable object **[on top of the table.]** John Muir is seated on a straight chair, c. 1900. This **[may have been the chair]** Helen **[used]** when she was doing his typing.

Although there were kerosene lamps in the house, the Muirs preferred to use candles. **[Former neighbor Frank Swett recalled as a boy seeing Muir's Study "lighted with tallow candles."<sup>251</sup> A 1907 visitor expressed surprise that "so pains-taking and precise a student as I had imagined Mr. Muir to be" exposed his "vast . . . treasure" to "the fire hazard of a frame ranch house lit with candles."<sup>252</sup>** An exception, however, seems to have been in the Study, where a student lamp stood on the center table. On two . . . occasions, Muir had been given lamps by women admirers. To his great friend, Mrs. Carr, he wrote in July 1872: ". . . I have not yet tried the lamp, but it is splendid in shape and shines grand as gold."<sup>253</sup>

Six months later, he wrote to thank Mrs. Kate N. Doggett for a similar gift and unwittingly revealed his hunger for beautiful objects:

This is the first St. Germain lamp I have seen and it is certainly the most beautiful of all light fountains. Its forms have been composed by a true artist. Its many curves blend into song with scarce a discordant tone . . .

The massive finely moulded foundation glows like an ice-polished dome, and the grateful **[?]** green of the shade is like that of high glacier lakes . . .<sup>254</sup>

**[Muir's older daughter Wanda preferred the student lamp for serious study, and in 1902 Helen noted that Wanda had gone "upstairs to study for that awful ex(am). . . she says she simply cant [sic] stand our hateful old candles, so to Papa's student lamp she has flown for comfort and light."<sup>255</sup> The edge of a lamp shade appears in figure 43.]**

**248 Katherine Hooker's personal reminiscence of visiting Muir, c. 1913–14, undated and incomplete manuscript, Katherine Hooker Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.**

249 JM to HM, December 3, 1914, JMNHS.

**250 Museum Catalog, JMNHS.**

**251 Contra Costa Gazette, April 20, 1956, "Contra Costa Illustrated" magazine insert, photo caption, in JMNHS.**

**252 Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907," John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

253 Bade, *Life and Letters of John Muir*, II, 240.

254 *Ibid.*, 372.

**255 HM Diary, entry for January 6, 1902, in JMNHS.**

The sketch of Wanda when she was three or four years old, made by William Keith, is now owned by **[the family.]** The identity of the many photographs framed in gilt on the mantel remains largely conjectural, other than that they were family and friends. In two separate letters written in 1908 and 1914, Muir mentions having a picture of A. H. Sellers on the mantel and even in his loneliness to conversing with the photograph. **[A 1910 visitor to the Study remarked that “the mantel was strewn thick with photographs and print portraits,” and also noted a portrait of Theodore Roosevelt hanging on the wall.<sup>256</sup>]**

Of the Keith paintings that Muir loved and hung in his Study to contemplate, only two remain in the family, “Tulolumne Meadows” . . . and “Mt. Rainier” . . . **[According to Helen Muir, her sister Wanda inherited “The Oaks” but sold it. It eventually went to the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California.<sup>257</sup>]**

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The colored prints of the Grand Canyon . . . were common to the **[period, and were installed in the Study by Muir and his daughter in February 1902. Helen wrote in her diary: “I spent the time from 8:30 until 12:00 helping Papa with his grand [sic] Canon [sic] pictures that Mr. Garrett sent him last month, we glued them on to tough brow[n] wrapping paper, and when they were all up, the effect was grand, almost startling as you go in the door . . .”<sup>258</sup>]**

In the bookcase behind John Muir a small bust or plaque can be seen. **[See figures 42, 43 and 44.]** The details are not clear enough to permit identification. Helen Muir wrote that Gertrude Boyle in the early 1900s made a bust of John Muir and also a small plaque. She made casts of John Swett, Sr., and Professor Joseph LeConte at the same time. Helen thought the families of each kept **[the]** plaques, but she did not know where the busts were.<sup>259</sup> The bust in the photograph does not appear to be bearded, so it may have been that of a person he admired, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, not Muir himself.

Apparently, John Muir enjoyed having living things around him. In a letter to Helen in 1908, he commented that he had placed a rubber tree plant on her desk, but whether he meant the desk in her bedroom or the table on which her typewriter sat is open to question. He may have had a block of Sequoia in either his den or the hallway, for he had a specimen block cut from a fallen tree trunk, which he described as hardly distinguishable from those of living trees although the fragment had lain exposed in the damp forest for more than 380 years and possible three times that long.<sup>260</sup>

**[Several visitors to the Study remarked on Muir’s collection of natural specimens. J. E. Calkins, who stayed with Muir in 1907, observed: “He was a student, not a collector. A few not so wonderful concretions lay along the wall on the floor, along with other odd-shaped rocks, but I saw nothing remarkable in any of them, and Mr. Muir did not notice them, or mention them.”<sup>261</sup> A visitor a few years later described the Study as: “a veritable museum, filled, not with the bones and skins of animals, but with bits of rock and other bloodless relics of the mountains.”<sup>262</sup> Another visitor mentioned that: “in every corner of the room were tucked specimens, ghosts of flowers, miniature horns, cones and branches, all held sacred from profane dusting or, indeed, from any kind.”<sup>263</sup>]**

The desk top **[figures 42, 43 and 44]** is cluttered with papers. The stub pen which Helen said her father used can be seen and also his inkwell, a square glass one. The typewriter that Helen and Mrs. Parsons **[Muir’s secretary in 1914]** used was a Hammond shuttle typewriter. Helen stated that her father was smoking cigarettes, in addition to

**256 “Program John Muir Day,” in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

**257 HM to Hattie Joost, March 30, 1958, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.**

**258 HM Diary, entry for February 18, 1902, in JMNHS.**

259 HM, April 2, 1957, in JMNHS.

260 Frederic R. Gunsby, *South of Yosemite: Selected Writings by John Muir* (Garden City, 1968), 218–19.

**261 Calkins, “A Visit to John Muir’s Home in 1907,” John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

**262 “Program John Muir Day,” in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

**263 “Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir,” Tompkins, John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.**

his pipe, when he visited her in Los Angeles.<sup>264</sup> The Kriess family found a Camel cigarette case behind a cupboard, but the fact that the package belonged to Muir cannot be proven.<sup>265</sup> Nevertheless, ash trays surely must have been part of the furnishings in this room.

The pieces of clock that Helen mentioned in her description were those John Muir made on the Wisconsin farm before he attended the University **[of Wisconsin.]** The clock was shaped like a scythe, with each part of it in the form of an arrow or scythe. The pendulum was a sheaf of arrows. The clock would strike, register hours and dates, light fires and lamps, and by means of a set of levers and cogwheels tip a rudely constructed bed up on end at any desired hour. It was carved with the phrase, “All Flesh is Grass.” Wanda and Helen donated the clock to the University of Wisconsin after Muir’s death.<sup>266</sup>

**[After Muir’s death the *Martinez Daily Gazette* reported that the clock: “long since dismantled and taken apart for safe-keeping, occupied a strong box safely stowed in the library ... the clock, like the other possessions of Muir was found in his study.” The *Gazette* also reported that a “miniature band saw mill which he aimed to operate by water power” was stored on shelves in the Study.<sup>267</sup>]**

Of the curios, two spears, several Indian baskets and pieces of pottery, Navajo rugs, small ivory carvings and a walrus tooth are owned by **[the family]**.

### Finishes

Muir’s Study was probably papered at some point during his occupancy. Wallpaper samples from the room have been dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as outlined in the 2003 draft Historic Structures Report, and the report concludes that the lack of a printed pattern or varnish layer on the surviving samples indicates that the early wallpaper was an “oatmeal” or ingrain paper like that used in the first- and second-floor Halls and in Muir’s Bedroom. A frieze paper dating to the same period was also recovered from the room, but no design or pattern for the paper was determined. It is likely that the ceiling was papered during the 1892 redecorating and that a calcimine layer was applied later, perhaps as part of the repairs and renovations Muir made in 1906.<sup>268</sup>

Helen Muir wrote that there was a large brown and tan rug on the floor of her father’s Study, with linoleum from the edges of the rug to the wall.<sup>269</sup> Finishes evidence examined for the HSR shows that all existing floor finishes were applied after the time the Muirs lived in the house. This report recommends reinstalling linoleum in the room and acquiring a large rug for the center of the room. The carpet is illustrated in figure 41, dated about 1897.

### List of Recommended Furnishings

Although the photographs showing Muir in his Study probably date from the mid-1890s, the detailed written descriptions provided by Helen Muir and Muir’s friend Katherine Hooker describe Muir’s use of the Study from around 1906 until his death in 1914. The list of recommended furnishings relies on the photographs where possible, but in general will reflect the later period, when Muir and Helen were together in the house and when Muir was alone with one servant.

Muir built the passageway to the Study Annex just before his death in December 1914 and this will be re-

264 HM interview, July 1962, transcript in JMNHS.

265 Interview with Mrs. Barbara Schultz, February 25, 1968, transcript in JMNHS.

266 Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 53.

**267 *Martinez Daily Gazette*, October 8, 191[5], John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific. See Appendix D for more on the clock.**

268 HSR, part 1, March 2003, 28–30.

269 HM, April 2, 1957, in JMNHS.

tained, although it preserves the configuration of the room as Muir knew it for only a matter of weeks. A new barrier of a contemporary design should be installed across the south end of the room. Visitors will continue to access the Scribble Den through the door to the Hall, or through the passageway to the Study Annex. Reproduction prints and paintings should be installed on the south wall, but the bookshelves original to the room will not be reproduced because they would interfere with the visitor pathway.

It is important not to straighten up or neaten this furnishings installation. Muir’s work habits were messy and disorganized and many visitors noted the accumulation of objects filling the Study. Muir himself wrote: “I never imagined I had accumulated so vast a number [of notes.] The long trains and embankments and heaped-up piles are truly appalling.”<sup>270</sup>

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Desk</b> , oak, roll top, glass front shelves above, 6’ x 7’ x 18” (against east wall)	Figure 41; HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire roll top desk as in photograph.
<b>Notebooks, photographs, stacks of papers and clippings</b> (on desk)	Figure 41; HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire.
<b>Box</b> , cardboard, with label, w/papers, notebooks (under desk)	Figure 41; HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire or reproduce box. Acquire papers and notebooks.
<b>Rocks, horns, figures and other natural specimens</b> (on shelves)	Figure 41; HM, April 2, 1957 Calkins, “A Visit to John Muir’s Home in 1907” “Program John Muir Day,” in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific “Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir” by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, undated and unidentified newspaper article	Acquire.
<b>Painting</b> , framed, “Mt. Rainier,” by William Keith (on east wall above roll top desk)	HM, April 2, 1957; Figure 53 (object in family)	Reproduce painting and frame in family collection.
<b>Sketch</b> , framed, Muir’s desk at the University of Wisconsin (on east wall, next to door)	HM, April 2, 1957	Reproduce.
<b>Bookcase</b> , Eastlake style, glass front, three sections, three drawers across base (against east wall)	HM, April 2, 1957 See also figures 42–47.	Reproduce original bookcase in Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific or acquire similar period bookcase.
<b>Books</b> , to fill shelves (in bookcase)	HM, April 2, 1957 See also figures 42–45.	Use books in collection. Acquire pre-1914 books as necessary. See Appendix C for list of Muir’s books in park collection.
<b>Painting</b> , framed, “Lyle Fork, Tuolumne Meadows” by William Keith (on top of bookcase against east wall)	HM, April 2, 1957	Reproduce painting if possible.
<b>Rocks, horns, and other natural specimens</b> (on top of bookcase)	HM, April 2, 1957 Calkins, “A Visit to John Muir’s Home in 1907” “Program John Muir Day,” in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific “Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir” by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, undated and unidentified newspaper article	Acquire.

270 JM to Katherine Hooker, December 17, 1910, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Baskets</b> , two, woven (on top of bookcases on east or west walls or on top shelf of roll top desk)	HM, April 2, 1957 Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907" "Program John Muir Day," in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific "Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir" by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, undated and unidentified newspaper article	Remove and reproduce originals, catalog #1394 and #1401.
<b>Pots</b> , three, prehistoric Indian, from Arizona and Mexico (on top of bookcases on east or west walls)	HM, April 2, 1957 Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907" "Program John Muir Day," in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific "Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir" by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, undated and unidentified newspaper article	Remove and reproduce originals: catalog #1396 and #3738 (Arizona pots) and catalog #1395 (Mexico pot).
<b>Desk</b> , flat top (against north wall)	HM, April 2, 1957. "A visit to John Muir's home in 1907," by J. E. Calkins, c. 1940.	Use Muir's original desk, catalog #649.
<b>Desk calendar</b> , 1908 (on desk)	Common usage	Use catalog #650.
<b>Papers, bound publications, books, photographs</b> (on desk)	Figures 42, 43, and 44	Acquire.
<b>Ink well</b> , square, clear glass, and <b>Pen holder</b> , black handle, possibly japanned finish (on desk)	Figures 42, 43, and 44	Acquire.
<b>Dictionary</b> (on desk)	Common usage	Use catalog #638 without stand.
<b>Case</b> , for glasses (on desk)	Common usage	Use catalog #651.
<b>Magnifying glass</b> (on desk)	Figure 42	Acquire.
<b>Portfolio or case</b> , black leather or leather-like, with clasp or seal (on desk)	Figures 42 and 44	Acquire.
<b>Candlestick</b> , with candle (on desk)	<i>Contra Costa Gazette</i> , April 20, 1956 and Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907"	Acquire period candlestick and candle.
<b>Student lamp</b> , brass, w/white shade, electrified (on desk)	Figure 43 HM Diary, entry for January 6, 1902 HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire.
<b>Paperweight</b> , round glass (on desk)	Figure 44	Acquire.
<b>Vase or glass</b> , clear, with leaves or flowers (on desk)	Figures 43 and 44	Acquire.
<b>Waste basket</b> , wire (on floor near desk)	Common usage	Use catalog #659.
<b>Books, notebooks and magazines</b> (in piles on either side of desk)	HM, April 2, 1957 Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907" JM to Katherine Hooker, December 17, 1910	Acquire.
<b>Box</b> , wooden, holding books and documents (next to desk)	See figure 41 (east wall) for example.	Use reproduction in place.
<b>Petrified wood</b> , two pieces (on floor near desk)	HM, April 2, 1957	Use catalog #1534 and #1535.

	OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
	<b>Armchair</b> , oak, swivel base, leather and horsehair seat (at desk)	Muir may be sitting in an armchair in figures 42, 43, and 44.	Repair and use catalog #642 or determine style from photos and acquire.
	<b>Spears</b> , Alaskan, two (in northwest corner)	HM, April 2, 1957	Remove and reproduce originals, catalog #1397 and #1402.
	<b>Bookcase</b> , Eastlake style, glass front, three sections, three drawers across base (against west wall)	HM, April 2, 1957 See also figures 42–47.	Reproduce original bookcase in Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific or acquire similar period bookcase.
74	<b>Books</b> , to fill shelves (in bookcase)	HM, April 2, 1957	Use books in collection. Acquire pre-1914 books as necessary. See Appendix C for list of Muir's books in park collection.
	<b>Bust</b> , white (on top row of shelves, inside bookcase)	Figures 42, 43, and 44	Acquire.
	<b>Rocks, horns, and other natural specimens</b> (on top of bookcase)	HM, April 2, 1957. Calkins, "A Visit to John Muir's Home in 1907" "Program John Muir Day," in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific "Our Own Thoreau: Hardy John Muir" by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, undated and unidentified newspaper article	Acquire.
	<b>Painting</b> , framed, "Santa Barbara Mission," by William Keith (on top of bookcase)	HM, April 2, 1957	Reproduce painting if possible.
	<b>Portrait of Wanda as child</b> , framed charcoal sketch, by William Keith (on top of bookcase)	HM, April 2, 1957 Figure 32 (original in family)	Reproduce original sketch in family and frame.
	<b>Painting</b> , framed, "The Oaks," by William Keith (over fireplace mantel)	HM, April 2, 1957 HM to Hattie Joost, March 30, 1958	Use reproduction in place.
	<b>Framed portrait of Ann Gilrye Muir</b> (on mantel)	HM, April 2, 1957 "Program John Muir Day," in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific	Use catalog #1730.
	<b>Photographs</b> , gilt framed, family portraits, 12 or more, to include A. H. Sellers (on mantel)	HM, April 2, 1957 "Program John Muir Day," in John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific	Acquire period frames and reproduce photographs in collection.
	<b>Clock</b> , case (on mantel)	Common usage	Use catalog #621.
	<b>Grate</b> , for coal and/or wood (in fireplace)	Katherine Hooker reminiscence, undated	Acquire.
	<b>Coal scuttle</b> (near fireplace)	Common fireplace accessory.	Acquire.
	<b>Pile of logs</b> (near fireplace)	"Our Own Thoreau," by Juliet W. Tompkins	Acquire.
	<b>Poker</b> (near fireplace)	Common fireplace accessory	Acquire.
	<b>Coffee pot</b> , tin or enamel (near fireplace)	Katherine Hooker reminiscence, undated	Acquire.
	<b>Coffee mugs</b> , two, enamel or ceramic (on mantel or center table)	Katherine Hooker reminiscence, undated	Acquire or substitute catalog #2005, tin Sierra Club cup, for one mug.



OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Academic hoods</b> , two, Berkeley and Yale (hanging near west window)	Gifts to Muir	Remove and reproduce originals, catalog #2115 and #2116.
<b>Mirror</b> (over sink on south wall)	Common sink accessory	Acquire.
<b>Towel</b> , white linen (on towel bar at sink)	Common sink accessory	Acquire.
<b>Soap</b> (on sink)	Common sink accessory	Acquire.
<b>Print</b> , "Yosemite Falls," tinted, and frame (on south wall)	Appropriate to room	Use catalog #620 (frame).
<b>Painting</b> , framed, "Tuolumne Meadows," by William Keith (on south wall)	HM, April 2, 1957 Figure 51 (original in family)	Reproduce original painting and frame.
<b>Prints</b> , series of colored images of Grand Canyon (on south wall, below painting)	HM, April 2, 1957 HM Diary, entry for February 18, 1902	Acquire series of Grand Canyon prints. Glue to brown wrapping paper and mount.
<b>Table</b> , dark oak, approximately 3' square (in center of room)	Figure 41	Acquire.
<b>Student lamp</b> , brass, w/green shade, electrified (on center table)	HM Diary, entry for January 6, 1902 HM, April 2, 1957	Use catalog #643.
<b>Books and periodicals</b> (piled on table)	Figure 41 See also figures 43 and 44.	Acquire or use items from collection.
<b>Binocular case</b> , leather (on top of books)	Figure 41 shows a leather strap of some kind.	Acquire.
<b>Scarf</b> , dark and light stripes with twisted fringe (on top of books)	Figure 41.	Acquire.
<b>Papers and printed materials</b> (stacked on bottom shelf of table)	Figure 41	Acquire.
<b>Cigar boxes</b> , two (on or near table)	Commonly used for storage	Use catalog #636 and #746.
<b>Rocking chair</b> , oak, "heavy" with "broad arm rests" (beside the table and in front of the fireplace)	HM, April 2, 1957	Use catalog #1771 if appropriate or acquire replacement.
<b>Typewriter</b> , "Hammond" shuttle typewriter (on center table)	HM interview, 1962, cited in 1971/1982 HFR HM, April 2, 1957: "On the other side of the small table which also held my typewriter . . ."	Acquire and place on center table.
<b>Chair</b> , straight back, caned seat (near table, for use with typewriter)	HM, April 2, 1957 See figures 2 and 45 for examples of this type of chair.	Acquire or restore uncataloged oak side chair with leather seat in collection.
<b>Box</b> , typewriter ribbon (on center collection).	For use with typewriter	Use uncataloged box on table.
<b>Rug</b> , tan and brown (center of room)	Figure 41 HM, April 2, 1957	Acquire. Determine color and pattern of linoleum around perimeter of room.
<b>Window shades</b> , three, dark green (on north and west windows)	Figure 7	Acquire shades and pulls.

# Study Annex

## 76 Furnishings

John Muir's Study Annex is located south of the Study and is connected by a passageway Muir constructed in late 1914. Before he built the passageway, the room was used by Louie Muir as her bedroom and later by Helen as her bedroom. Helen recalled that the original fireplace in the room was built of "plain white marble," but after the 1906 earthquake the fireplace "upstairs in the bedroom back of my father's study" was replaced by a red brick fireplace "with a piece of petrified wood imbedded in it."<sup>271</sup>

Helen described her mother's bedroom furniture as consisting of a "heavy walnut double bed, dresser (marble top) stand, chairs." She noted that her mother's furniture was like that in all the other bedrooms except for the girls'. She and Wanda had beds and a dresser made of bird's-eye maple in their room.<sup>272</sup> She described the wallpaper as "creamy with silvery sheen, conventional design" and mentioned painted woodwork in the room.<sup>273</sup>

Helen later stated that the furniture in her mother's bedroom was maple, and included a "twin bed, dresser and desk." It is likely that she was referring to furniture she, or she and Wanda, used when they moved into the room after their mother's death in 1905.<sup>274</sup>

By early December 1914 Muir had broken through the wall separating his Study and the bedroom directly south of it. He wrote: "From my den I have made a passage through into your room and lined the walls with shelving and made it into a library. It looks fine." At the same time he had the floors painted "both upstairs and down," laid "good matting on the halls" and replaced the portieres in the downstairs hallway.<sup>275</sup>

Jose Figueredo was an employee at the Muir ranch in 1914, and was interviewed about the house and grounds in 1979. He delivered meals to Muir in the year before he died, and remembered when Muir converted the back bedroom to a library annex and study room. Figueredo's interview is summarized in Appendix F of the 1971/1982 HFR. Text from the 1971–1982 HFR is boxed. New material appears in brackets and sans serif bold-face within the box.

According to Mr. Figueredo, the study annex was lined with custom-made bookcases made to Muir's specifications by a local cabinet maker known as "Old Man Marsh."

According to Mr. Figueredo, the bookcases were separate pieces of furniture, made in sections and were not attached to the wall or floor. They were constructed of clear, first-grade soft wood (but NOT redwood) and the

271 HM, April 2, 1957 in JMNHS.

272 Ibid.

273 Notes from conversations with HM, June 1958 in JMNHS.

274 Ibid.

275 JM to HM, December 3, 1914, William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

shelves were between 10” and 12” wide. The shelves were spaced “as high as a *National Geographic*” (roughly 11”). The bookcases were “as high as Muir could easily reach.” (. . . approximately 6’8”).

According to Mr. Figueredo, “75% of the contents of the bookcases were magazines rather than books, and of the magazines, between 40% and 50% were *National Geographics*.” Mr. Figueredo remarked that there were books in glassed-front bookcases in the east and west parlors. In addition to the bookcases in the study annex, the second-floor hall was lined on both sides with bookcases similar to those in the annex.

. . . He could recall no tables, chairs, or other furnishings. He did recall that there were a number of crates of different kinds of fruit, mainly apples and oranges, that had been sent to Muir by his admirers. Muir apparently had guests help themselves from these boxes. Mr. Figueredo recalled that the fruit boxes were from Washington, Oregon and California.<sup>276</sup>

In an earlier interview Figueredo said:

When Muir died, we spent three days with a horse and wagon hauling out just the books. There were bookshelves on both sides of the second-floor hall. At least seven feet tall.

The built-in drawers between the study and the room you call the Sierra Club room are original. Muir kept peppermint candy in one of the drawers. People used to send him boxes of fruit and other fancy things. He kept that in the room you called the Sierra Club room and he always invited me to have peppermint and help myself to the fruit. There was a bureau and some other furniture in this room, but it really wasn’t too much of anything – except the fruit boxes.<sup>277</sup>

## Finishes

The draft HSR concludes that the doors to the Study Annex were grained to match the doors on the first floor. Although original wall finishes have been lost, the trim in this room appears to have been originally painted cream with an even layer of varnish.<sup>278</sup>

## List of Recommended Furnishings

The most detailed information about the furnishings in this room comes from Jose Figueredo’s 1979 interview in which he recalls the appearance of the Study Annex in late 1914. Because Muir created the passageway and built the shelving shortly before he died, this room necessarily interprets a brief period in Muir’s time in the house.

Visitors will enter the Study Annex either through the passage from Muir’s Study, or through the doorway on the east wall. Barriers should not be needed in this room, as all furnishings are reproductions, but park staff can consider installing barriers across the doorways if loss or damage occurs.

276 Appendix F: Figueredo Interviews, in HFR, 334–36.

277 *Ibid.*, 341.

278 HSR, 32–33.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Bookcases</b> , freestanding, 5' 4" high, 3' wide, 11" deep, good quality soft wood (against east, west, and south walls)	Figueredo interview, 1979	Reproduce.
<b>Magazines</b> , mostly <i>National Geographic</i> (filling three-quarters of shelves)	Figueredo interview, 1979	Acquire pre-1914 <i>National Geographic</i> magazines and other periodicals.
<b>Books</b> (to fill remaining shelves)	Figueredo interview, 1979	Acquire.
<b>Crates</b> , five, for apples and oranges (stacked in room)	Figueredo interview, 1979	Reproduce. Use Washington, Oregon, and California growers' labels.
<b>Apples and oranges</b> (enough to fill one crate each)	Figueredo interview, 1979	Acquire reproductions and attach to crates.
<b>Window shades</b> , two, dark green (on south and west windows)	Common usage	Acquire shades and pulls.

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# Helen's Bedroom

## Furnishings

Helen and Wanda Muir used various bedrooms on the second floor from the time the family moved into the house in 1890 until they grew up and moved away. As Helen noted in later years to then-owner Mrs. Sax, “We weren’t static.”<sup>279</sup> Before Mrs. Muir’s death in August 1905, Helen and Wanda shared a bedroom on the east side of the house, directly south of their father’s bedroom. For part of this time Helen probably had the room to herself, since beginning in January 1900 Wanda was intermittently away at prep school and college.

Helen remembered that she and Wanda used “bird’s eye maple beds and [a] dresser.”<sup>280</sup> She later mentioned that the wardrobe was to the right of the doorway, and a wash basin was located “on [the] right in [the] corner.” Helen also recalled white bedspreads on the beds and mentioned that during her grandparents’ time there was a maple four-poster bed in the room.<sup>281</sup>

Helen Muir’s diary from November 1901 through March 1902 has survived, and some of the entries provide limited information on the furnishings in the room. In large part the diary entries record Helen’s fascination with trainspotting, which she apparently could practice from the window in her room. One November morning she “peeked out” out at an early morning train “from behind the curtain” in her room, and later in the morning saw and heard other trains as she was dressing.<sup>282</sup> Helen had a good view of the trains as the new railway ran across vineyards near the house and “Muir Station” was established on the family property.<sup>283</sup>

At the end of November 1901 Helen wrote to agents of the various railways requesting “Illustrated printed matter” which began to arrive on December 6. She was delighted to receive pamphlets on California and Colorado, and publications titled “At Your Service,” “From the Window,” “A Famous Battle Field,” “Southern Fruits,” and “Short Stories with Long Sequels.” She was “perfectly satisfied to keep train records, [and] read [railroad] or football storys [*sic*]”<sup>284</sup> and enthused about a “fine full-page picture of the Black Diamond Express which is awfully pretty.”<sup>285</sup>

Helen’s fervid interest in trains led her to order technical works such as *Locomotive Engine-Running and Management* and *Progressive Examinations for Locomotive Engineers and Firemen*, which she believed “would teach me a great many things about an engine that I have long wanted to know.” She placed her orders under the name of “H. L. Muir” rather than using her full first name, for fear the publisher wouldn’t send the “pre-

279 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

280 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

281 Notes on conversation with HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

282 HM Diary, November 17, 1901, JMNHS.

283 1971/1982 HFR, 32. See also Bade, vol. II, 338.

284 HM Diary, December 7, 1901, JMNHS.

285 HM Diary, December 9, 1901, JMNHS.

cious books” to a girl.<sup>286</sup> She also read periodicals such as *World’s Work*, *Youth’s Companion*, *Country Life*, and *The Daily Press*.<sup>287</sup>

Helen’s older sister Wanda shared the bedroom when she was home from school, but did not share Helen’s enthusiasm for trains. While Helen looked forward to the day when prints of the “Empire State Express,” “No. 999” and “the De Witt Clinton” engines would “hang on my bedroom walls,” she sympathized: “Poor Wannie!”<sup>288</sup> When Helen hung train pictures in the room just after Christmas, Wanda gamely exclaimed: “Why that’s pretty,” which Helen appreciated.<sup>289</sup>

80 In early January Helen was sent “18 lovely locomotive pictures with which to decorate my room.” She planned to “hang the pictures on the door which opens into Papa’s room” [on the north side of the room] and the four prints that would not fit on the door would be hung “just beneath” her Catalina Island and Tanforan Fair posters, replacing the magazine advertisements that had been there.<sup>290</sup> In the end she hung 17 of the prints on the wall instead of the door, and claimed: “My room is a dream, over twenty locomotive pictures adorn the walls, nearly 30 posters and ... railroad maps besides . . .”<sup>291</sup> Helen loved her room and summed up: “I guess there never was a girl who owned such a room as mine, I am perfectly satisfied with it, and think it is the loveliest girls [*sic*] room I ever saw any where [*sic*].”<sup>292</sup>

Christmas 1901 brought small and useful gifts to Helen, any of which may have been used in her bedroom. She tallied up a hat pin, a box of writing paper, a box of candy, four or five lace handkerchiefs, a pair of manicure scissors, two calendars, “a fancy candle stick,” two volumes of poetry “beautifully bound,” and two “lovely” pictures.<sup>293</sup>

Helen used field glasses to view numbers on the trains<sup>294</sup>, and she may have kept these in her room. One afternoon in early 1902 she grabbed her “field glasses, pad of yellow paper and pencil [*sic*] for freight car numbers, [and] rushed out” to record the numbers on the engine and the railroad cars. She thought the engine was “a beauty.”<sup>295</sup>

Helen mentions wearing a plaid “tam” twice in her diary and she sat by the fire, probably in the Dining Room, wearing her “dressing sack” late into the morning in January.<sup>296</sup> Both of these garments would be found in her bedroom.

Helen also took guitar lessons and purchased a used but good “Spanish” guitar made by “a famous maker.”<sup>297</sup> After the April 1906 earthquake Wanda wrote to her father from Martinez to assure him that his books and pictures were unharmed, and added: “Tell Helen that her guitar and the rest of her belongings are safe and unhurt.”<sup>298</sup>

286 HM Diary, January 27, 1902, JMNHS.

287 HM Diary, January 14, 1902, JMNHS.

288 HM Diary, December 10, 1901, JMNHS.

289 HM Diary, December 28, 1901, JMNHS.

290 HM Diary, January 8, 1902, JMNHS.

291 HM Diary, January 10, 1902, JMNHS.

292 HM Diary, January 8, 1902, JMNHS.

293 HM Diary, December 25, 1901, JMNHS.

294 HM Diary, January 30, 1902, JMNHS.

295 HM Diary, February 27, 1902, JMNHS.

296 HM Diary, January 16 and 28 and March 5, 1902, JMNHS.

297 HM to Hattie Joost, March 9, 1956, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

298 Wanda Muir to JM, April 18, 1906 in *Dear Papa: Letters Between John Muir and His Daughter Wanda*, Jean Hanna Clark and Shirley Sergeant (Fresno: Panorama Books West, 1986).

In May 1905 Helen moved to Adamana, Arizona, in an attempt to improve her health. Her father traveled with her, but while she was gone her mother suddenly became ill and John Muir returned to Martinez to be with Louie when she died. Helen stayed in Arizona until the summer of 1906 when she returned to her father in Martinez. At this point she moved into the room that had been her mother's and eventually became the Study Annex. When the 1906 earthquake struck, Muir referred to the room south of his Study as Helen's room, describing the mantel that fell off "like a postage stamp stuck with poor mucilage."<sup>299</sup>

Helen became ill again in 1907 and moved away to Daggett, California, in the Mojave Desert. Wanda moved out of the house permanently when she married Tom Hanna in June 1906 and moved to the adobe house on the Martinez property. Helen eventually married and never returned to live in the house with her father, although Wanda and her family continued to live nearby.

### Finishes

When Muir installed wallpaper in the house in 1892, frieze, felt and stock paper were all purchased for "Wanda's Room," indicating that the girls' room received new wall and ceiling paper.<sup>300</sup> According to the 2003 draft HSR, a closet was removed from the room when Muir remodeled in 1906, and it is likely that new wall finishes were applied at that time, but any original finishes have since been removed.<sup>301</sup>

The woodwork and doors to Helen's Bedroom were originally grained, and the ceiling was probably calcimined, but it is not clear which colors were used during the time Helen used the room.<sup>302</sup>

### List of Recommended Furnishings

Helen's Bedroom is interpreted to the period from late 1901 through early 1902 during which she kept her diary. Two beds will be shown in the room to indicate that Wanda still stayed there on occasion.

Depending on park preference, a barrier can be erected across the doorway or installed just inside the doorway, allowing visitors to step inside the room.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Beds</b> , two, twin, bird's-eye maple (against north wall or against west wall)	Notes on HM conversation, June 1958: "two beds side by side"	Acquire.
<b>Mattresses</b> , two, twin (on beds)	Common usage	Acquire reproduction mattresses.
<b>Sheets</b> , four, white cotton (on beds)	Common usage	Acquire period or reproduction sheets.
<b>Pillows</b> , two, and pillow cases, two, white cotton (on beds)	Common usage	Acquire period or reproduction pillow cases. Acquire new pillows.
<b>Bedspreads</b> , two, white (on beds)	Notes on HM conversation	Acquire.
<b>Comforters or quilts</b> , two (on beds)	HM Diary, January 14, 1902	Acquire.
<b>Wardrobe</b> , maple (on south wall)	Notes on HM conversation: "Wardrobe on right as enter"	Acquire.

299 JM to HM, May 2, 1906, William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

300 G. W. Clark invoice, July 27, 1892, JMNHS.

301 Draft HSR, March 2003, 36.

302 Ibid., 37.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Wash stand</b> , maple (on west wall, behind door)	Notes on HM conversation: "Wash basin on right in corner"	Acquire.
<b>Bowl and pitcher</b> , ceramic (on wash stand)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Towels</b> , two or three, linen or cotton (on wash stand)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Dresser</b> , maple (against east wall)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Dresser scarf</b> (on dresser)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Mirror</b> (hanging on east wall above dresser)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Dresser set</b> , to include: hand mirror, comb, brush, etc. (on dresser)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Railroad pamphlets and publications</b> , various (on dresser and bed)	HM Diary, December 7, 1901	Acquire.
<b>Writing paper</b> , in box (on dresser)	HM Diary, December 25, 1901	Acquire period box. Acquire new paper.
<b>Handkerchiefs</b> , lace, 2 or 3 (on dresser)	HM Diary, December 25, 1901	Acquire.
<b>Calendar</b> , with pictures, 1902 (on wall)	HM Diary, December 25, 1901	Acquire.
<b>Field glasses</b> , with case (on dresser)	HM Diary, January 30 and February 27, 1902	Acquire.
<b>Pad</b> , yellow paper, and pencil (on dresser)	HM Diary, February 27, 1902	Acquire new paper and period pencil.
<b>Tam</b> , plaid (on bed)	HM Diary, January 1902	Acquire or reproduce.
<b>Chair</b> , straight-back maple with cane bottom, or rocking chair (near window)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Wrapper</b> , ladies' (draped over back of chair)	HM Diary, January 10, 1902	Acquire or reproduce.
<b>Cushion</b> , patchwork or other decorative (on chair)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Bookcase</b> , small (under window on west wall)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Books</b> (in bookcase)	HM Diary, November 1901-March 1902	Acquire.
<b>Doily and knick-knacks</b> (on bookcase)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Bedside table</b> , maple (between twin beds)	Common usage	Acquire.
<b>Doily</b> (on table)	Common usage	Acquire.



OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Books</b> , several, about football and/or trains (on table)	HM Diary, December 7, 1901	Acquire.
<b>Candlestick</b> , decorative, with candle (on table)	HM Diary, December 25, 1901	Acquire.
<b>Periodicals</b> , <i>World's Work</i> , <i>Youth's Companion</i> , or similar (on table or book shelf)	HM Diary, January 14, 1902	Acquire.
<b>Poetry books</b> , two, "beautifully bound" (on table)	HM Diary, December 25, 1901	Acquire.
<b>Guitar</b> , wooden, "Spanish" (leaning in southeast corner)	HM to Hattie Joost, March 9, 1956	Acquire.
<b>Maps</b> , railroad, 4–6 (tacked on walls)	HM Diary, January 8, 1902	Acquire.
<b>Advertisements</b> , magazine, especially for travel and railroads (tacked on walls)	HM Diary, January 8, 1902	Acquire.
<b>Posters</b> , 20–30, to include Catalina Island and Tanforan Fair (tacked on walls)	HM Diary, January 8, 1902	Acquire or reproduce.
<b>Locomotive pictures</b> , at least 17: "Empire State Express" "No. 999" "DeWitt Clinton" "Black Diamond Express" or similar (tacked on walls and door to JM's room)	HM Diary, December 1901-January 1902	Acquire or reproduce.
<b>Curtains</b> , white or light-colored, one pair (in window)	HM Diary, November 17, 1901 Figure 10	Reproduce.
<b>Window shade</b> , dark green (in window)	Figure 10	Acquire.

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# John Muir's Bedroom

## 84 Furnishings

John Muir used the northeast bedroom at the front of the house, directly across the hall from his Scribble Den. Little is known about the furnishings in this room, as Muir and his daughters did not often mention it in their letters. The 1906 earthquake shook the mantel off the fireplace, but Muir commented: “Strange to say not a single inch of plaster has fallen from the walls.”<sup>303</sup>

Former owner Henry Sax said in an interview that the closets in this room and in the adjoining girls' bedroom were removed during repairs and renovations made after the 1906 earthquake. Closets were rebuilt by later owners. Sax also commented that the wash basin and fixtures on the east wall were original to the room, and that the cabinet under the basin was original.<sup>304</sup>

After Helen moved away in 1907, Muir wrote to thank her for a “nice hairbrush” and for having her mother's picture “beautifully and safely framed.”<sup>305</sup> These items may have been kept in his bedroom, in addition to the “little daguerreotype” that he had framed while on a trip to visit Helen in 1913.<sup>306</sup> Shortly before he died, Muir commented that his bed was “very comfortable.”<sup>307</sup>

A visitor to the house in 1907 commented that both Muir and Helen slept outside – Muir “on a cot on the flat roof of a west side porch, or bay window” and Helen “in a small tent that was guyed fast on some similar flat area above the front door.”<sup>308</sup> Helen's tent is visible in figure 7, although Muir's tent on the west porch roof does not appear in this image.

The roof was lined with tin, and in 1909 Muir wrote to a friend that he “looked out my den window and saw a superb growth of white crystal ice ferns adorning the tin roof.”<sup>309</sup> The Saxes reported that Helen said the roof was modified “so [Muir] could hear the sound of the rain on the roof.”<sup>310</sup>

After a bout of the grippe in 1909, Muir recovered on the balcony, and during an August 1908 heat wave he escaped to Helen's balcony over the front door.<sup>311</sup> Muir's former secretary commented on his use of the porch

303 JM to HM, May 2, 1906, William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

304 Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

305 JM to HM, no date [1908], William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

306 JM to HM, March 27, 1913, William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

307 JM to HM, December 3, 1914, William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

308 J. E. Calkins, “A visit to John Muir's home 1907,” undated typed manuscript, c. 1940, John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.

309 JM to Katherine Hooker, June 3, 1909, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

310 Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sax, March 14, 1967, JMNHS.

311 JM to HM, October 20, 1909 and JM to HM, August 1, 1908, William Colby Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

in a 1916 reminiscence about the period just before Muir’s death: “He was living alone in the dismantled old home, unused save for his study and sleeping porch.”<sup>312</sup>

## Finishes

Muir’s Bedroom was one of those wallpapered in 1892. The NPS installed new reproduction wallpaper in the room in 1979, based on surviving examples of original wallpaper. Like that in the Scribble Den, the paper in Muir’s Bedroom is a green ingrain paper. The frieze paper for this room had a painted pattern applied to the surface of the ingrain.<sup>313</sup>

It is unclear whether the ceiling was painted or papered, although it appears that the floor was originally painted in khaki-brown and varnished. The trim in the room was painted cream with a tinted varnish, and the doors were originally finished in a mahogany graining and burl pattern.<sup>314</sup>

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## List of Recommended Furnishings

Visitors will enter Muir’s Bedroom to view cased exhibits. Reproduction period finishes will be retained, and period window treatments will be installed. Nothing is known about floor coverings in the room. Several small rag rugs or reproduction period rugs could be used in the room, according to park preference.

Exhibit lighting should be planned and installed as necessary.

OBJECT AND LOCATION	EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATION
<b>Window shades</b> , three, green (north and west windows)	Figures 7 and 10	Acquire and install shades and pulls.
<b>Curtains</b> , three pairs, white lace (north and west windows)	Figure 10	Reproduce curtains and hardware and install.

## Related Media

Exhibits in this area cover Muir’s family and early history and emphasize his work before he came to Martinez.

### *Concepts for Exhibits: Muir’s Background*

- Muir’s Family in Scotland
- Muir in Wisconsin
- Muir’s Early Travels: Indiana to Florida, Cuba, and New York

### *Possible objects:*

- Suitcase
- Photographs of parents and siblings
- Artifacts or graphics from University of Wisconsin
- Letter opener, made from locust tree at University of Wisconsin, catalog #255

312 Marion Randall Parsons, “John Muir and the Alaska Book,” *Sierra Club Bulletin*, vol. 10, no. 1, January 1916.

313 Draft HSR, March 2003, 34.

314 *Ibid.*, 34–35.

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# Guest Rooms

## 86 Furnishings

The three bedrooms south of Helen and Wanda's room were used by the Muirs as guest rooms. Helen recalled that the bedroom immediately south of the girls' room was a spare room, and the room south of that was "used by the governess when we were small girls." She wrote that all the bedrooms except the girls' had walnut double beds, marble top dressers, and chairs.<sup>315</sup> She later remembered that the "small" guest room was furnished with a "heavy walnut marble top dresser" and on the bed a "heavy honey comb spread" and "pure linen sheets." There was a rug on the painted floor, and the walls were papered.<sup>316</sup>

A 1907 visitor to the house recalled sleeping in a bedroom "without a fireplace, or a family portrait, or any other effort at interior decoration, but with simple comfortable furnishings." He remarked especially on "a huge, old, high-post bed, capped off with a Gargantuan feather bed that looked to be unscalable without a ladder. By all visible evidence it was one of the old corded beds that were in vogue a hundred years back; no springs; but we did not miss them."<sup>317</sup>

## Finishes

In 1892 three bedrooms were wallpapered in addition to John Muir's room and Wanda's room,<sup>318</sup> which was shared by Helen. It is likely that at least two of the rooms on the second floor were papered at this time. The third bedroom referred to in the receipt may have been on the ground floor, or on the second floor. The walls and ceilings in Bedroom 205, just south of Helen and Wanda's room, have been stripped of all original finishes, but an original layer of varnished cream trim remains, as do samples of mahogany graining on the doors. The floor may have been painted in the same khaki-brown as Muir's Bedroom.<sup>319</sup>

The other rooms on the east side of the second floor hall have been treated in a similar fashion. Wall finishes have been stripped, and inconclusive evidence as to ceiling finishes remains. According to the draft HSR, the trim in these rooms was originally painted cream and varnished, and doors were originally grained in mahogany. Floors may have been painted khaki-brown. One bedroom retains traces of original gold leaf on the picture rail.<sup>320</sup>

315 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

316 HM, June 1958, JMNHS.

317 Calkins, "A visit to John Muir's home 1907," undated typed manuscript, c. 1940, John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific.

318 G. W. Clark invoice, July 27, 1892, JMNHS.

319 Draft HSR, March 2003, 37–38. Note that room numbering conventions follow those in the draft HSR.

320 Ibid., 37–42.

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# Practice Room

## Furnishings

According to the 1971/1982 HFR, John Muir built the brick addition housing the second-floor Practice Room sometime after 1890. The purpose of the extension was to house a new metal water tank on the first floor, but Louie soon turned the second floor of the addition into a soundproof practice room for Helen and Wanda and their musical instruments.<sup>321</sup>

In her 1902 diary, Helen mentions going into the “brick room” and finding a disoriented bird flying around, which she eventually succeeded in getting out “without frightening him any more than was necessary.”<sup>322</sup> It is possible, however, that when she writes of the “brick room” she is referring to the ground floor of the addition, for in a later entry she says that on a very rainy day when she went to get the dog “and was opening the brick-room door swish came a palm leaf across my face . . .”<sup>323</sup>

## Finishes

The draft 2003 HSR notes that analysis of plaster currently coating the walls in the Practice Room was inconclusive. Window, door, and base trim and wood flooring were treated historically with an unpigmented varnish, which remains today.<sup>324</sup>

321 HM, February 4, 1957, JMNHS in 1971/1982 HFR, 24.

322 HM Diary, February 21, 1902, JMNHS.

323 HM Diary, March 5, 1902, JMNHS.

324 Draft HSR, March 2003, 44.



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**Figure 5.** John Muir, Helen Muir and Louisiana Muir on front porch, pre-1905, 24/1347. John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Collection, University of the Pacific Library, © 1984 Muir Hanna Trust.

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**Figure 16.** Parlor sofa and side chair, part of set. John Muir National Historic Site.

**Figure 17.** Arm chair, part of set. John Muir National Historic Site.

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**Figure 22.** Center table, oval marble top. John Muir National Historic Site.

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**Figure 39.** *Woman’s Friend. A Complete Cook Book* by Mrs. J. L. Nichols, in *The Household Guide or Domestic Cyclopaedia*, 1897, p. 399.

**Figure 40.** “How to Can All Kinds of Fruit,” in *Woman’s Friend. A Complete Cook Book*, p. 468.

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**Figure 42.** John Muir at desk, c. 1895. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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**Figure 45.** John Muir seated in library. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

**Figure 46.** Eastlake-style bookcases, glazed. John Muir National Historic Site.

**Figure 47.** Muir's bookcases, Holt-Atherton Special Collections Room, University of the Pacific. Courtesy John Martini.

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**Figure 53.** "Mt. Rainier," by William Keith. John Muir National Historic Site.

**Figure 54.** Floor plan, Muir/Strentzel House. John Muir National Historic Site.

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**Figure 8** Muir House, east side, north end. John Muir National Historic Site.



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**Figure 9** Muir House, east side, south end. John Muir National Historic Site.

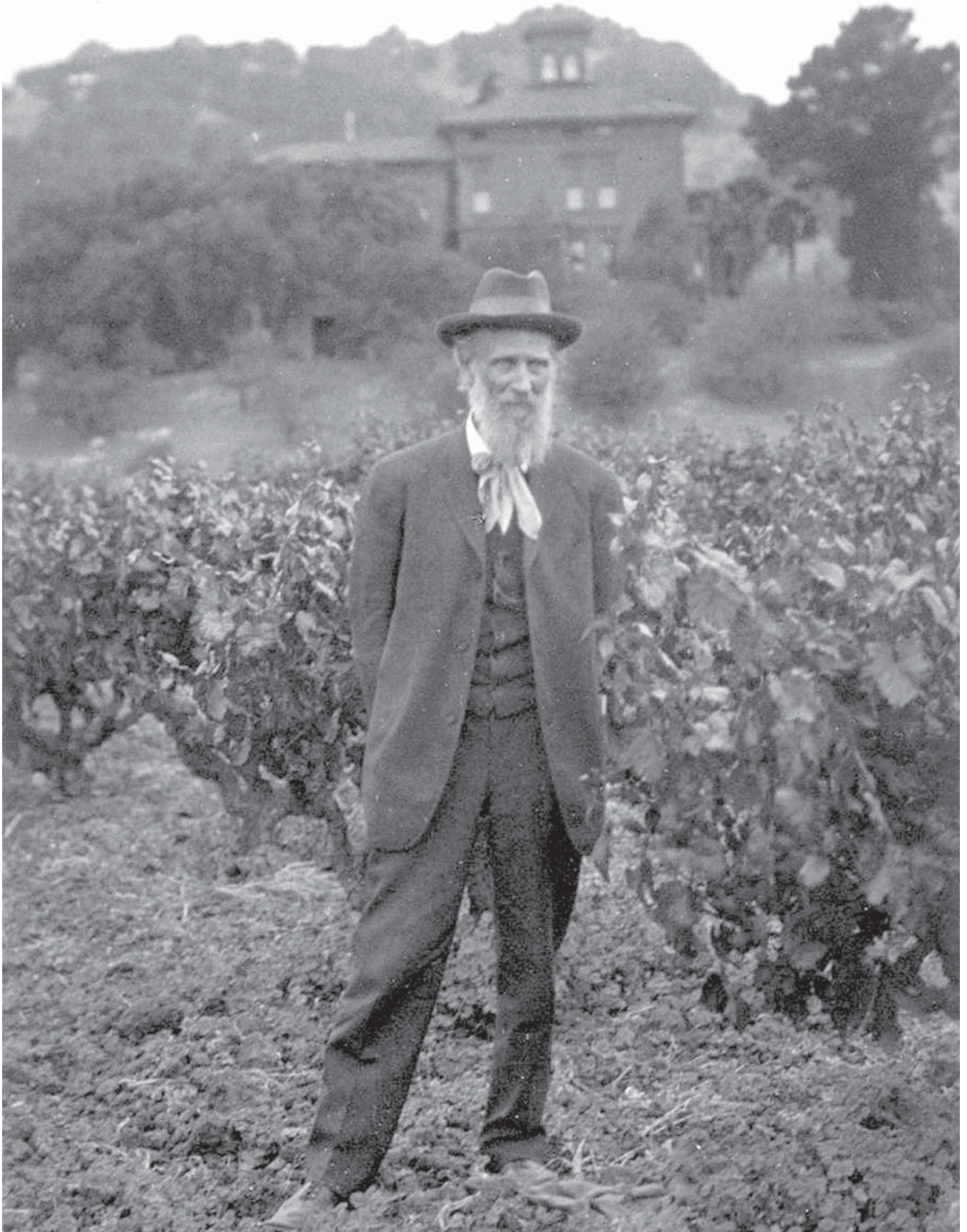




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**Figure 10** John Muir and east side of house, by Herbert W. Gleason, probably October 13, 1913. Bancroft Library Portrait Collection, University of California, Berkeley.





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**Figure 11** G. W. Clark and Co. invoice, July 27, 1892. John Muir National Historic Site.



San Francisco, July 27th 1892.

Mr. J. Muir

Martinez, Cal.

WALL PAPER  
WINDOW SHADES  
CORNICE POLES



G. W. CLARK & CO.

653 & 655 MARKET STREET.

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE FIRM.

Mr. & Mrs. Room.		
2 3/4	Rolls Frieze	2.00 5.50
14	" Felt.	.25 3.50
8	" Stock	.10 .80
Mandas Room.		
2 3/4	Rolls Frieze	2.00 5.50
12	" Felt.	.25 3.00
8	" Stock	.10 .80
Dining Room.		
2 3/4	Rolls Frieze	2.00 5.50
10	" Felt.	.25 2.50
Hall		
6	Rolls Frieze	2.50 15.00
32	" Felt.	.25 8.00
16	" Stock	.10 1.60
Bed Room		
14	Rolls Paper	.25 3.50
4	" "	.25 1.00
Parlor		
22	Rolls Granite	.25 5.50
48	ft. Moulding	.04 1.92
Bed Room		
6	Rolls Paper	.40 2.40
6	" "	.25 1.50
11	" Stock	.10 1.10
40	ft. # 9 Moulding	.04 1.80
Bed Room		
3	Rolls Paper - Frieze	1.00 3.00
15	" "	.60 9.00
8	" Stock	.10 .80
Colors		
		9.75
Expenses, fares, etc.		18.35
13	Days Labor	3.00 39.00
14	"	5.00 70.00
Painting		168.97
		200.00

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**Figure 12** Louisiana Muir's Steinway and Sons grand piano. John Muir National Historic Site.



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**Figure 13** Parlor sofa, part of set. John Muir National Historic Site.

**Figure 14** Side chair, part of set. John Muir National Historic Site.

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Photo 15. Two views of the original gilt mirror, taken c. 1938.

Owner: unknown

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**Figure 27** “Muir Glacier,” by Thomas Hill. John Muir National Historic Site.

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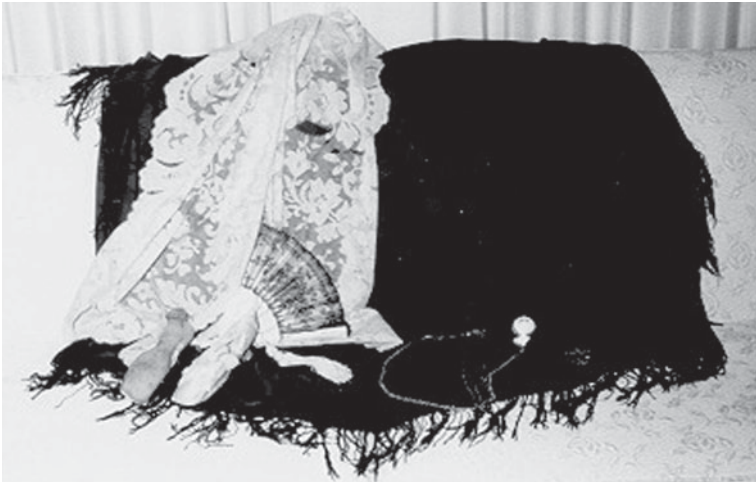




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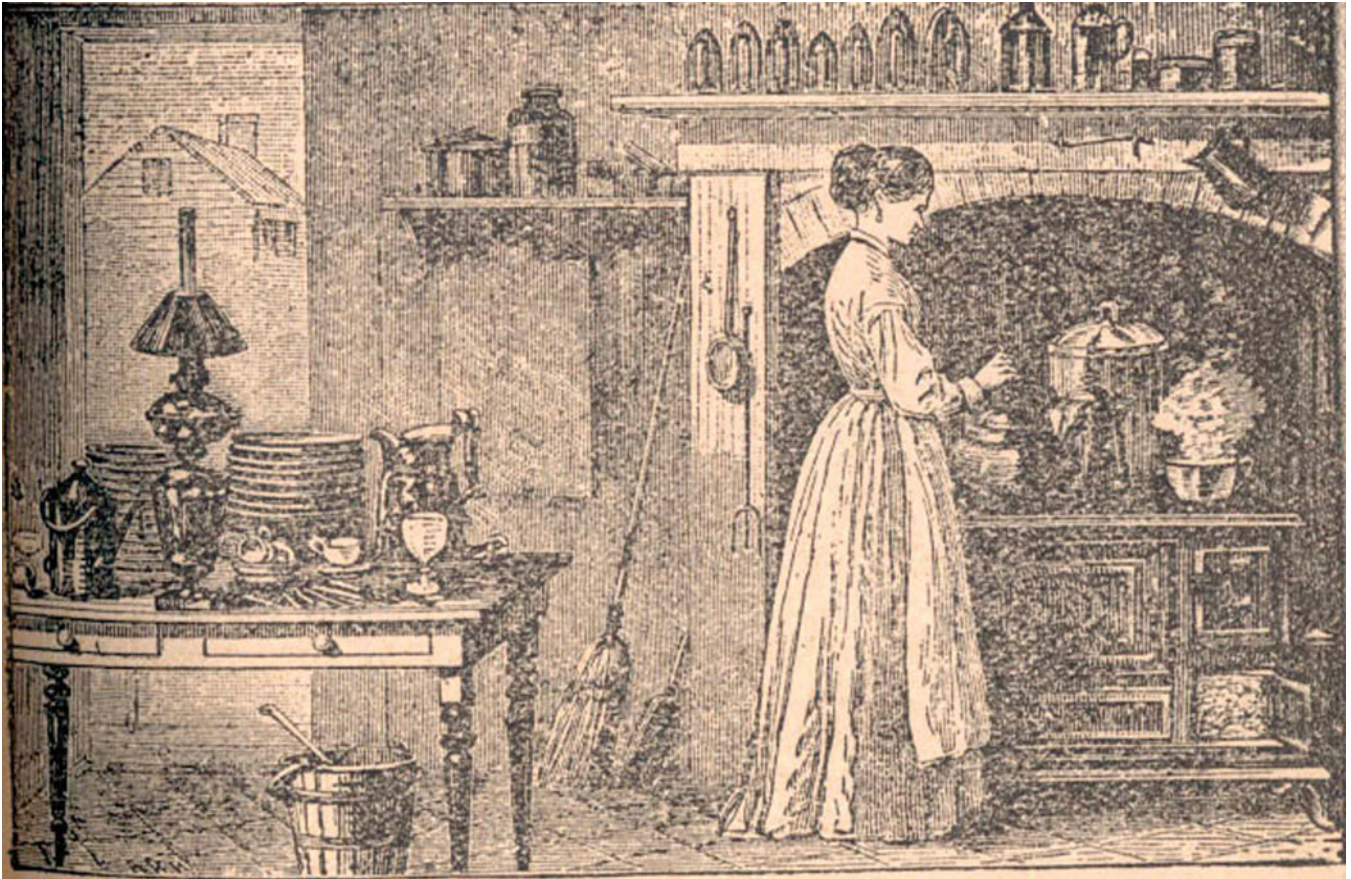
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**Figure 38** Base of sideboard with marble top. John Muir National Historic Site.



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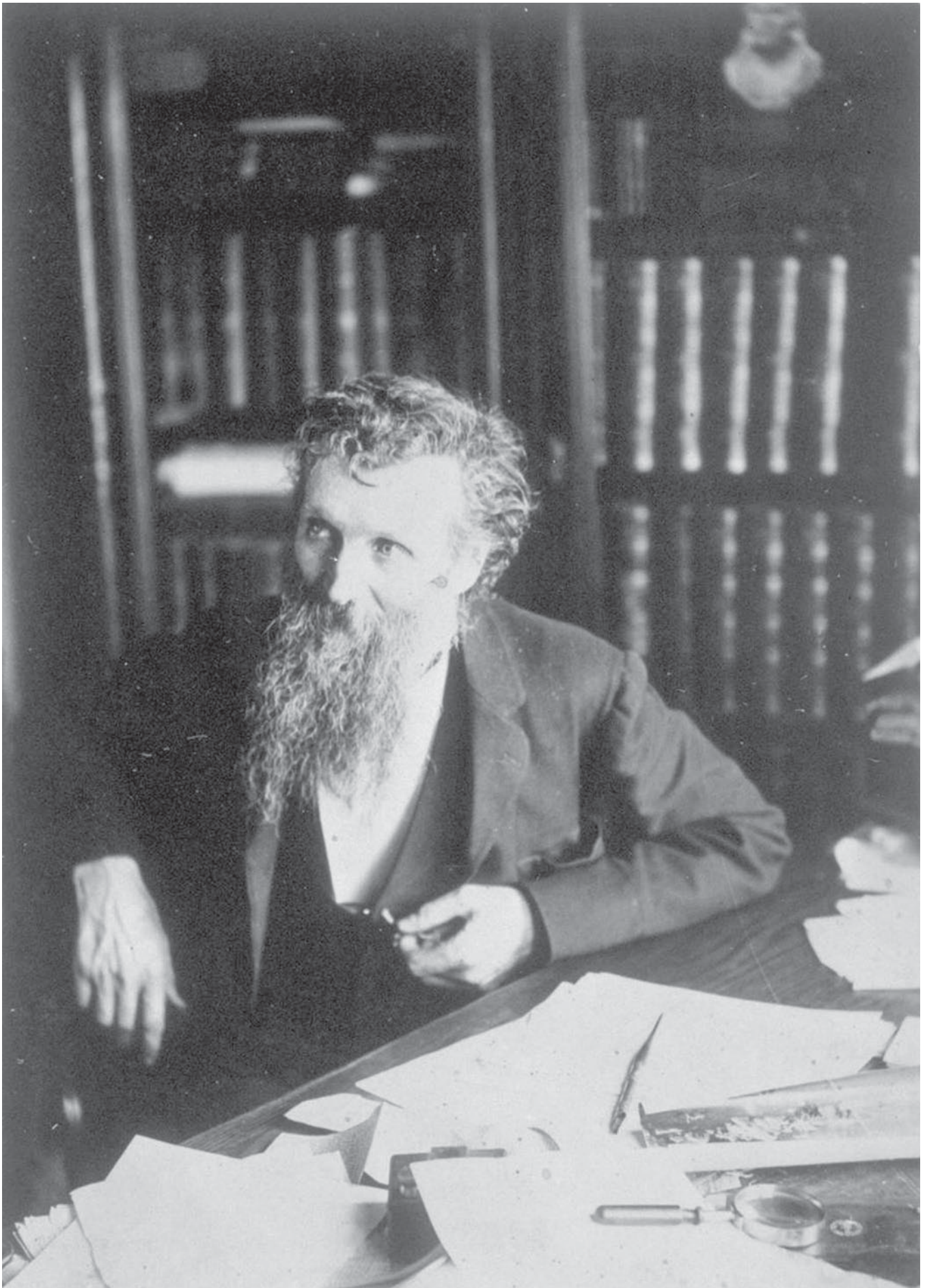




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**Figure 42** John Muir at desk, c. 1895. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.





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STRENTZEL-MUIR HOUSE

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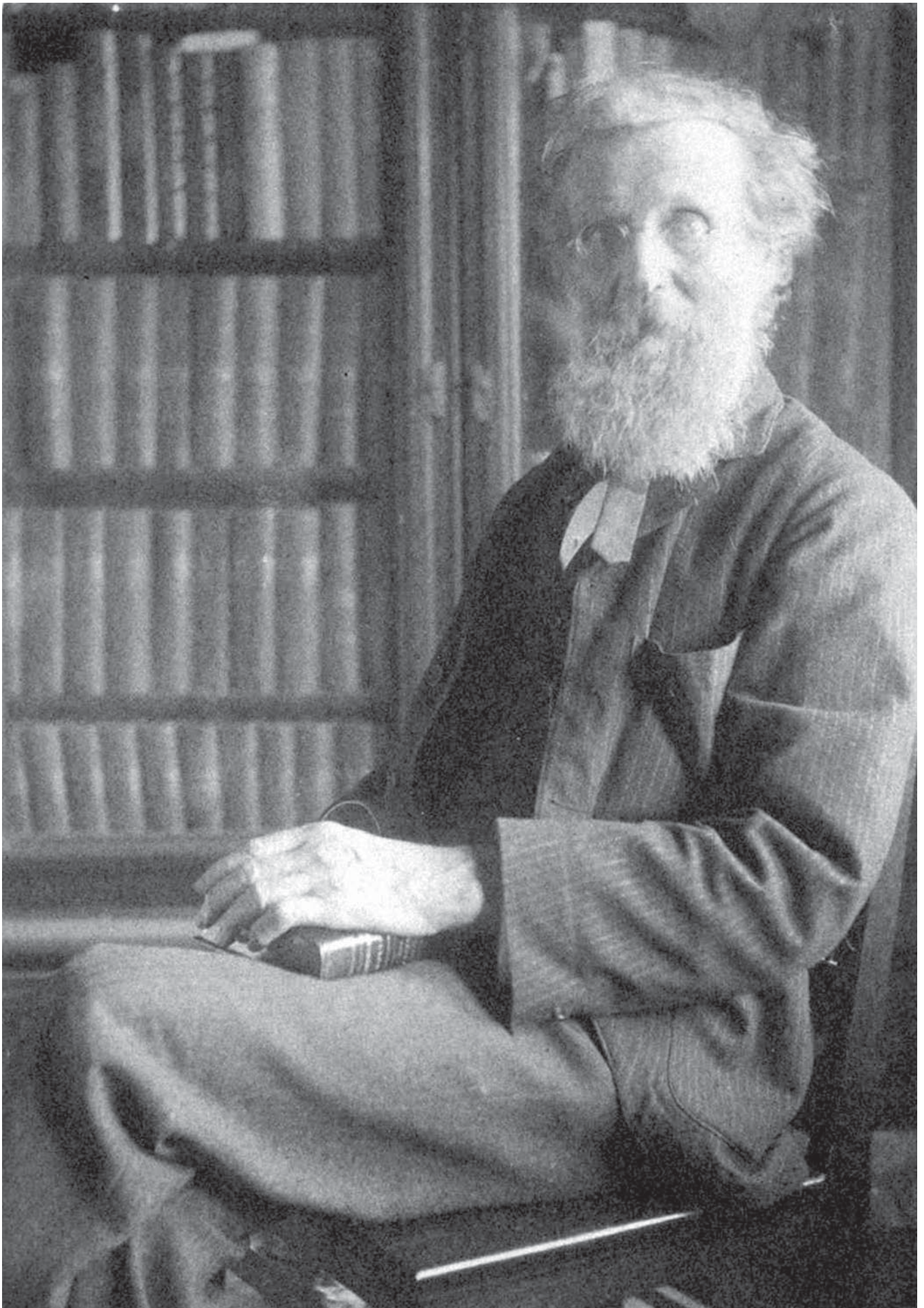
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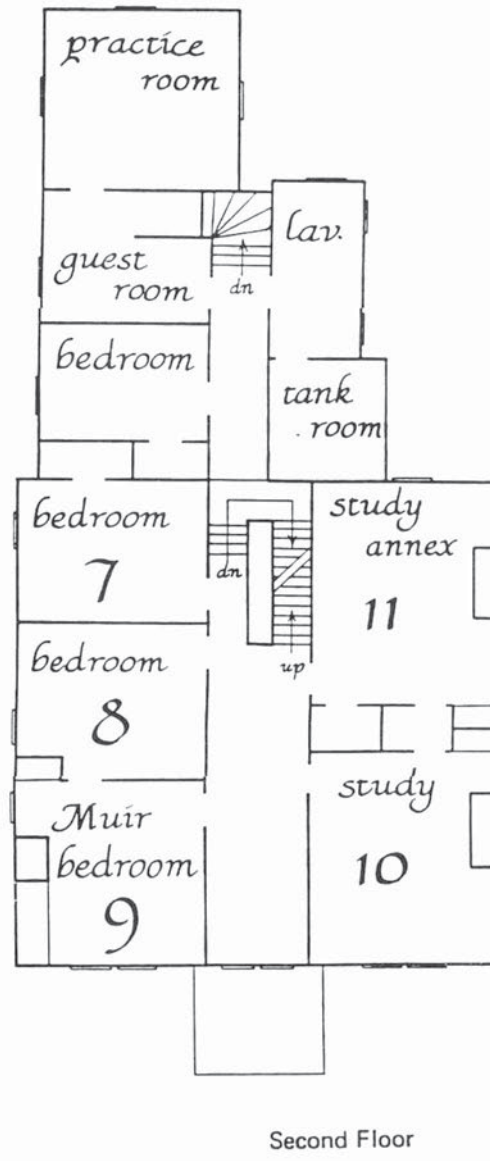
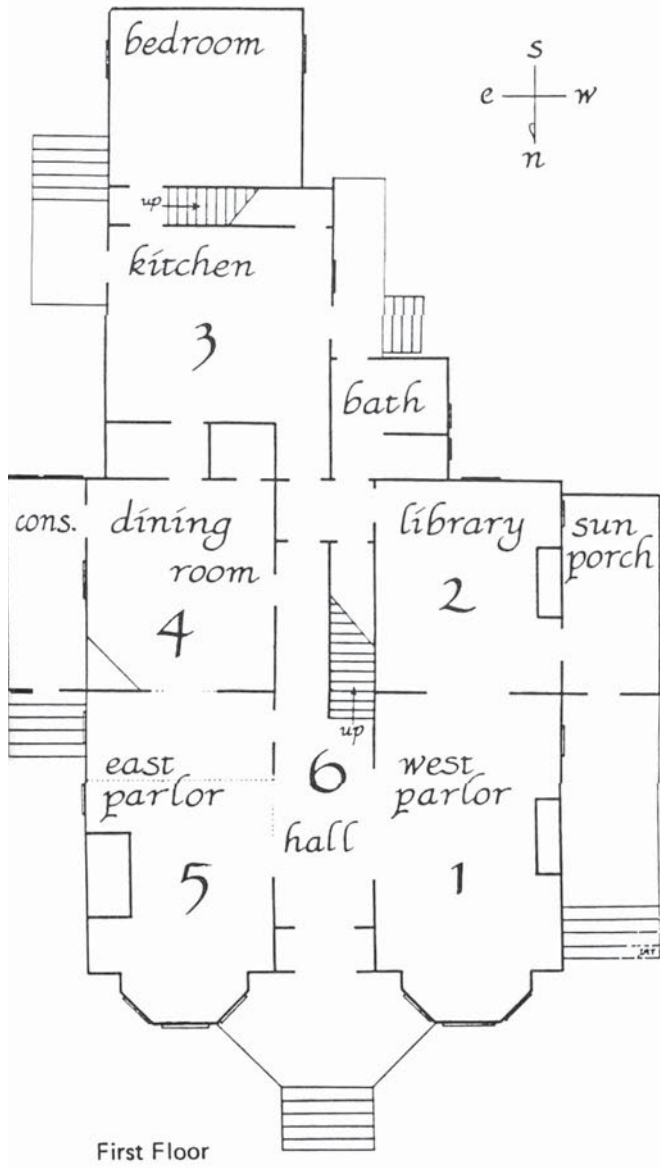
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**Figure 53** “Mt. Rainier,” by William Keith. John Muir National Historic Site.



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**Figure 54** Floor plan, Muir/Strentzel House. John Muir National Historic Site.







# Appendixes



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**Appendix A:** Parlor Furniture, from *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California*. Prepared under contract by Sally Johnson Ketcham, February 1971, revised 1982. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, pages 58–61.

**Appendix B:** Library, from *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California*. Prepared under contract by Sally Johnson Ketcham, February 1971, revised 1982. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center. **Library**, pages 64–66.

**Appendix C:** Books Owned by John Muir. List compiled by David H. Wallace, 1980. From *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California*. Prepared under contract by Sally Johnson Ketcham, February 1971, revised 1982. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, pages 346–61.

**Appendix D:** John Muir’s Clock

**Appendix E:** Letter regarding a type of bed John Muir invented, W. W. Church to Charles E. Brown, Chief, State Historical Museum, December 5, 1927. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

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# Appendix A

- 178 Parlor Furniture. From *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California*. Prepared under contract by Sally Johnson Ketcham, February 1971, revised 1982. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, pages 58–61:

Four distinct patterns of furniture have survived in the families of the descendents of the Strentzels and Muirs. The furniture sets are not complete and continuous use over approximately 80 years has required periodic upholstering by the owners.

One partial set consists of a settee and two side chairs [see figures 13, 14, and 15.] The pieces are upholstered with exposed frames, which are ornamented with round rosettes in the carved crests. The uprights have projecting side brackets. The back and seat are joined by square open brackets on the chairs and by upholstered arms on the sofa. The set probably dates to 1875–85. One chair is owned by Mrs. Jean Clark, who gave the sofa to her daughter, and the other chair is owned by the Strentzel Hannas. On all three pieces the upholstery has been changed. Commenting on the original upholstery of the furniture, Mrs. Clark said:

No the original of those three pieces was in a very ugly brown leather . . . It was horsehair stuffed and it had brown leather and the whole set was in brown leather by the time I remember it was all worn out but that had been in the Strentzel family and later the Muir family and Hanna . . . It was tufted more in the pattern of the red chair. It wasn't very well reupholstered, and some day I hope to have it done to match the others. . . <sup>325</sup>

The second set of furniture consists of a sofa, a side chair, and an arm or gentleman's chair [see figures 16 and 17.] The sofa has a padded seat, back, and arms, with exposed frame. The back is a double arch with side brackets on the carved and incised uprights. The carved cresting has rosettes (nine on the sofa and five on the chairs) surmounted by a fan. The front legs are turned, and the rear legs are straight and canted. This set may date to 1875–1890. All of this set is owned by Richard Hanna.

The third set of furniture is composed of a sofa, two side chairs, and an armchair [figures 18 and 19.] This set has a padded seat and back. The top rail is pierced with the exception of a rectangular piece in the center. The crest is carved. The arms of the chair are rolled and padded, with rosettes on the outward flaring arm supports. The seat rail has a small crest. The square back legs are canted, and the front legs are turned, terminating on casters. These parlor pieces date to 1875–90, and they are owned by John Hanna.

The fourth set, represented by a single platform rocker [figure 20], is owned by Mrs. Jean Clark. This rocker has a square upholstered back with exposed frame. The decoration on the side rails is incised, with small

325 Interview with Mrs. Jean Clark by John Jensen, JMNHS.

side brackets at the top. The top rail is pierced, with an incised, veneer cresting. The arms are curved with upholstered pads. The seat is upholstered, and the bottom rail has an incised decoration. This may or may not have been part of a parlor set. Possibly, it was bought as a separate piece to use in the library or in the sitting room. About this chair, Mrs. Clark remarked:

The chair you are sitting in is a platform rocker that belonged to the Strentzels and when I acquired it, it was in red velvet and it had about two coverings on and now I tried to restore it back to the way I . . . as near as I can to the original . . . it is exactly the way I think it was when it was original . . . it is just an oil finish as you can see, it isn't highly glossed or any special varnish on it . . . .<sup>326</sup>

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A fifth small rocking chair of an earlier period [figure 21] has survived in the home of Mrs. Mary Hanna. This chair has an oval-shaped upholstered back, with an exposed frame having a small carved decoration at the center and curving into plain wooden arms with ball terminals at the seat. The seat is upholstered. The rear legs are straight, and the front legs are turned with a turned stretcher connecting them. . . . this chair probably was considered somewhat old-fashioned by the Strentzels when they purchased their newer parlor furniture.<sup>327</sup> This rocking chair probably was relegated to the sitting parlor or to the bedroom.

Helen Muir mentioned that there was a marble-top table and also a small stand in the parlor. Two marble-top tables are owned by descendants of the Muirs. One has a white marble top that is cartouche-shaped, resting on a similarly shaped table. The four cyma-curved legs have carved decorations on each knee. An X-shaped curved stretcher has a mushroom-shaped wooden finial. The legs may have rested originally on casters. This center table probably dates to 1845–60 [figure 22.]

The second marble-top table is later in date – 1870–85. This is a rectangular trestle table with a white marble top. The apron bears a carved and veneered triangular pattern around it. The elaborate X-shaped trestles are reinforced by wooden rods with round balls. The single stretcher is carved with five balls for dividers. The trestles rest on casters. This table is owned by Strentzel Hanna [see figure 23.]

The remaining tables are pedestal. The first table has a cartouche-shaped top of wood with a plain skirt conforming on the top, which overhangs it. The pedestal tapers toward the top and is supported by three cyma-curved feet. This table [figure 24] is owned by Strentzel Hanna and dates to 1825–50. The second pedestal table [figure 25] has an octagonal top overhanging a skirt of the same shape. The pedestal is composed of four turned rods resting on a carved square base supported by four animal-shaped feet.

Which of these tables originally stood in the west parlor has not been determined by those who were acquainted with the house. Mrs. Clark remarked that the table that she now owns was painted black to simulate teak or ebony. Mrs. Clark refinished it to walnut, not caring for the darker color.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Parlor sets ordinarily did not include a rocking chair.

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# Appendix B

180 Library. From *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California*. Prepared under contract by Sally Johnson Ketcham, February 1971, revised 1982. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, pages 64–66:

## Library

Although we do not know which parlor set was used to furnish this room, it should be remembered that Mrs. Clark believed the chair she owns, the sofa owned by her daughter Mrs. Isobel Gaines, and the chair owned by the Strentzel Hannas originally were upholstered in brown leather. [See Appendix A.]

Helen Muir mentioned that there were bookcases in the library, and two Muir descendants own three large handsome bookcases dating to 1870–1885. The large apothecary/bookcase (JMNHS #39) in Dr. Strentzel’s study is original to that room. It is not known which is the bookcase mentioned in 1879 by Mrs. Strentzel in her diary as having been made by Mr. Austin. The bookcase owned by Strentzel Hanna is smaller than the two owned by his brother. This Eastlake-style piece has a base with two drawers that have veneer panels and two bail handles on each. The top has two glazed doors, each of which is divided in the center by a muntin of wood. There is veneer trim on the rails and scalloped trim across the top rail. The astragal also is decorated. There are three shelves within the base.

The two bookcases now owned by Richard Hanna have three glazed doors across the front and differ only slightly in detail. One is six feet eleven inches in length, and the other is seven feet two inches, with the height of both approximately six feet. The three drawers across the base have veneer trim and lion-head, cast-brass hardware. The top rail of each door has a carved and incised design on a rectangular panel. There are turned pillars at each of the front edges, and a pierced gallery surmounts the top. Both are fine examples of the period.<sup>328</sup> [See figures 46 and 47.]

A discussion of the tables known to have been used by the Strentzels and Muirs may be found [in Appendix A.]

No mention is made of a desk in the library. Since two secretaries have been retained in the family’s collections, it is logical to suppose that one of these may have been used in this area. One desk is a tall Eastlake-style, cylinder-front secretary dating to 1870–85 [figures 33 and 34]. The base has two drawers, which overhand two lower drawers and a cupboard. The top has a pair of glazed doors and three shelves. Burl veneer trims the cylinder lid, the drawers, doors, and top rail. The present owner of this secretary is Richard Hanna.

The second secretary owned by the family is a small African mahogany piece [figure 35], which is said by its present owner, Mrs. Clark, to have come around the horn to California. This is an earlier desk than the above

328 There is reason to believe at least one of this pair of bookcases was used in Muir’s study. See discussion of study.



example and dates to 1840–1850. The base has a fall-front desk, a rounded drawer, and two straight drawers with wooden knob pull handles. The uprights are cyma-curved terminating in rounded feet. The top has two glazed doors, two small drawers, and very plain side, top, and bottom rails.

The library is said to have contained a curio cabinet on a stand in which Mrs. Strentzel's collections of rocks, petrified wood, and other specimens were displayed.<sup>329</sup> Mr. Sax remarked that Helen Muir had the cabinet in her home in Spokane, Washington, and that the dark wood piece was built hexagonal to fit into a corner.<sup>330</sup> It was inherited by her son, John Funk Muir of Spokane.

329 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

330 Conversation of June 1958, JMNHS.

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# Appendix C

- 182 Books Owned by John Muir. List compiled by David H. Wallace, 1980. From *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California*. Prepared under contract by Sally Johnson Ketcham, February 1971, revised 1982. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, pages 346–61.

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Agassiz, Louis. *Methods of Study in Natural History*, 1863.  
Apgar, Austin. *Trees of the Northern United States*, 1892.  
Bacon, Francis. *Essays*, 1871.  
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Ballard, Julia. *Moths and Butterflies*, 1890.  
Bauer, Juliette. *Lives of the the Brothers Humboldt*, 1853.  
Bayne[,] unknown. *Lessons From My Masters*, 1879.  
Berens, S. *Nansen in the Frozen World*, 1898.  
Bird, Isabella. *Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 1879–1880.  
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Bryce, James. *American Commonwealth, The*, 1897.  
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# Appendix D

## 188 John Muir's Clock

In her 1957 description of her father's study, Helen Muir notes that "parts of his famous wooden clock" were stored on shelves on the south wall of the room.<sup>331</sup> She refers to a clock that Muir constructed while studying at the University of Wisconsin. It consisted of a "large wheel with cogs some thirty inches in diameter," which was thought to serve as a "revolving disc to measure the time when the books he was studying would be brought around to his seat and likewise as a sort of desk top to carry them." The arrangement did not include a separate desk, although the clock was exhibited in 1915 on a base or platform.<sup>332</sup>

According to Muir biographer William Frederic Bade, before his death Muir told his friend and former classmate Edwin Cornish that the clock was stored in his attic. After Muir's death, Wanda and Helen suggested to Cornish's son that the clock would make an interesting exhibit for the Wisconsin Building at the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco. Alumni from the University of Wisconsin agreed, and the clock was exhibited. After the exposition Wanda and Helen donated the clock to the University.<sup>333</sup>

Muir's daughters brought the clock parts in a box and "because some of the parts were missing it could not be made to function as a clock" for the exposition. Muir's sketch of the clock had been published, and it was assembled at the exposition using the drawing as a guide.<sup>334</sup>

By 1930 the clock was reassembled at a museum, presumably at the University of Wisconsin. Fred Wilhelm of the museum wrote: "The parts such as were left of the John Muir clock were held in the museum store room prior to my setting it up . . . There were a great many parts missing, no part of the whole thing being complete, although most of the pieces for the clock part of the set up were there. There were only a few parts for the desk part of the clock and all the rest of the parts had to be made up for this, and such parts of the clock itself as were missing." Some pieces had to be made, with only the "very small sketch" to work from. Wilhelm commented: "There was probably [*sic*] as much or more time spent in puzzling over the various pieces and their size and location, as was spent in actually making them and putting them together."<sup>335</sup>

Wilhelm also mentioned that the museum held "another set of some of the pieces for another one of Muir's clocks which was made in the shape of a scythe, which I presume they will some day have restored."<sup>336</sup>

331 HM, April 2, 1957, JMNHS.

332 Frank V. Cornish to Miss M. W. Parsons, September 29, 1931, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

333 William F. Bade to Miss M. W. Parsons, December 12, 1929, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

334 Frank V. Cornish to Miss M. W. Parsons, September 29, 1931, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

335 Fred Wilhelm, [?] Museum to Miss Margaret Parsons, February 13, 1930, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

336 *Ibid.*

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# Appendix E

Letter regarding a type of bed John Muir invented.

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W. W. Church, Soldier's Home, to Charles E. Brown, Chief, State Historical Museum, December 5, 1927.  
Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your request that I give you all the information I can about the famous clock of Mr. John Muir and all I know about him, I will state that I knew Mr. Muir very well as a student of the Wisconsin University. He occupied the North East corner room, second floor, in the North Building. I saw his clock, on a shelf, over his bed: it appeared to be an ordinary clock. I paid little attention to it: did not examine it closely.

My father was in the furniture business in Madison at the time and Mr. Muir had him construct a bed which would get students up early mornings, whether they wanted to get up or not. The rails of bedsteads in those days were round and heavy, and pegs were drawn in them and bed cords were drawn back and forth to hold the tick or mattress and sleeper. According to instructions my father made a frame to fit between the rails which was supported by a cross piece nearer the head than the foot of the bed. The frame was attached to the head of the bed by some contrivance which held the bed and sleeper, but if the sleeper wanted to get up at 6 o'clock A. M. or any other hour the mechanism of the clock acted on a string or wire and loosened the attachment at the head of the bed so that the bed tipped up in a slanting position and left the sleeper in an inclined and uncomfortable position and he had to get up.

I did not examine the attachment at the head of the bed nor did I inquire about, or see the mechanism of the clock.

This is all I remember about the clock or bed. Mr. Muir at that time was devoting himself to the study of botany, laying the foundation for the splendid reputation he afterwards made in the State of California.

Very Respectfully  
W. W. Church



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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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