



The Strentzel and Muir Home

Dr. John Strentzel, John Muir's father-in-law, built the John Muir House in 1882. When Dr. Strentzel died in 1890, Mrs. Strentzel invited the Muir's to move into the "big house" with her. This was to be John Muir's home for the last 24 years of his life.

The "big house" is a 17-room wood frame mansion of the late Victorian period (Italianate style) built on a knoll with a commanding view of Alhambra Valley. It is a two story structure with a full basement and attic, a cupola on the peak of the roof, 12 foot high ceilings in the rooms, and over 10,000 square feet of floor space. The house was designed by architects Wolfe and Son of San Francisco and built by contractors Sylvester and Langabee of the same city.

The first floor contains an entrance hall, formal parlor, library with partially enclosed porch, kitchen; dining room with attached conservatory and family parlor. There were originally two water closets, one having been removed by John Muir in 1906.

The second floor has six bedrooms, one water closet and one bathroom. Three bedrooms have been restored: Muir's, the children's and the guestroom'. One large bedroom was converted to a study by John Muir and has been restored as such. The remaining room contains Sierra Club material.

The house cost over \$20,000 to build and furnish, and included such conveniences as indoor plumbing and gas lighting. There was a telephone in the house as early as 1884. John Muir had an electrical system installed just before his death in 1914.

Water for the indoor plumbing was provided by rainwater collected from the roof, or pumped from one of the three wells located near the house, and stored in redwood tanks in the attic. Any overflow went to a large brick cistern under the kitchen floor. Sometime after 1890, John Muir added a three-story addition to the back of the house that supports a large steel water tank in the attic.

There were originally seven imported Italian marble fireplaces of which only three remain. Two others were converted to brick and two were removed. The large family parlor fireplace is in the mission style that Muir had built after the original fireplace was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. Muir also opened up the two first floor parlors with large archways and a smaller one into the dining room during house repairs.

The house has remained largely unaltered structurally since Muir's time. The National Park Service has been involved in an on-going restoration program on the house and surrounding grounds since the house was declared a National Historic Site in 1964. Period furniture and artifacts have been used whenever