



Foundation Document Overview

John Muir National Historic Site

California

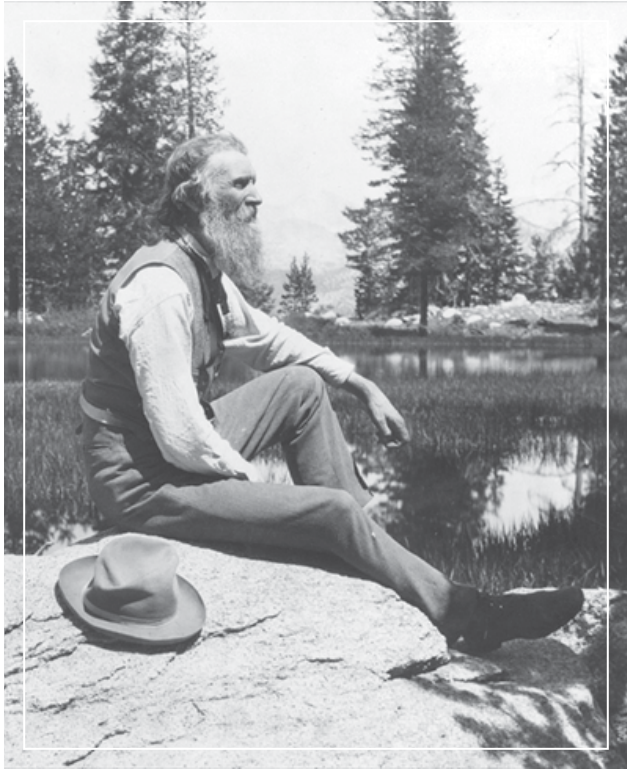


John Muir, his wife Louie, daughters Wanda and Helen on their front stoop (Photo credit: John Muir NHS, JOMU 1732).

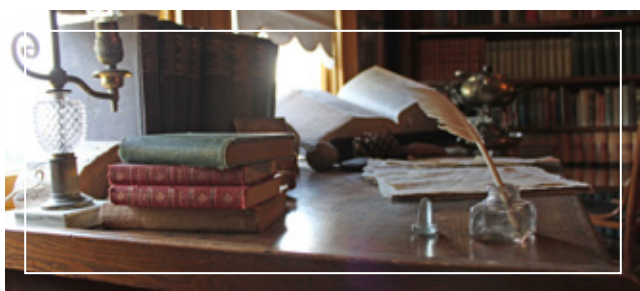
Contact Information

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Purpose



JOHN MUIR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves and protects the home and portions of the Alhambra Valley agricultural estate where John Muir lived, worked, and is buried, to memorialize and connect people with Muir's global legacy as an influential naturalist, writer, and champion for protecting national parks and wild lands.



Significance

Significance statements express why John Muir National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The park is the best place to learn about John Muir as a multifaceted individual, family man, and businessman. The support of family and friends, along with the income generated by fruit ranching, allowed him to pursue his passions of research, travel, and advocacy.
- Through his role in founding the Sierra Club, his political leadership, and his influential writings, John Muir's inspirational vision and advocacy launched an era of environmental activism at home and abroad which continues today.
- John Muir is considered a key founder of the national park system for his role in establishing and protecting several early national parks and his influential publication, *Our National Parks*.
- Given John Muir's pivotal role in the founding of the national park system, John Muir National Historic Site is uniquely positioned to explore how societal biases were woven into the system from its very origins in Muir's time and why they continue today.
- John Muir composed many of his most persuasive and important literary works in the "scribble den" of his home.
- John Muir National Historic Site includes the final resting place of John Muir in the Strentzel-Muir family gravesite, which as a pilgrimage site served as a catalyst for the designation of the park.



Fundamental Resources and Values



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Muir House**
- **Cultural Landscape**
- **Mount Wanda**
- **Strentzel-Muir Gravesite**
- **Museum Collections**
- **John Muir's Legacy**

John Muir National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Martinez Adobe**

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Accomplishments of Early Conservation Movement.** John Muir, a self-educated immigrant from Scotland, became an eloquent, persuasive writer, scientist, and advocate who played a pivotal role in launching the conservation movement in late 19th and early 20th century America.
- **Home and Family Life.** Examining the family and professional aspects of John Muir's home life provides a better understanding of the multifaceted individual behind the legend.
- **Layers of History.** The Strentzel-Muir family's management of the land reflects a brief period of time among the complex layers of human history contained within the continuum of land use in the Alhambra Valley.
- **Muir's Conservation Legacy.** John Muir's life and conservation legacy continue to inspire a diversity of environmental stewardship efforts.
- **National Park System Inclusion.** Inequities of race, class, gender, and ethnicity from Muir's time influenced the composition of the modern conservation movement as well as the development of the national park system; understanding this history and its ramifications is critical in helping the National Park Service to chart a just and egalitarian direction for the future.



Description

John Muir National Historic Site is composed of portions of the 2600-acre ranch where John Muir raised a family, farmed, wrote, and advocated for environmental conservation. Established in 1964 and expanded through subsequent legislation, the park today consists of the 9-acre Strentzel-Muir estate, the 326-acre open space lands of Mount Wanda, and the Strentzel-Muir gravesite where Muir is buried.

The main 9-acre site contains the 1882 Italianate Victorian house where John Muir lived from 1880 until his death in 1914. The house is surrounded by orchards, vineyards, and the carriage barn, all of which enhance the character of the cultural landscape, reflecting the way it looked in Muir's time. Visitors may explore the house and the site through self-guided or ranger-led tours. Inside the Strentzel-Muir house, visitors learn about the Strentzel-Muir family, see the desk and study where John Muir wrote several of his famous works, and view objects owned by the Muir family to discover the many facets of Muir's life. The museum collection housed at the site contains many of Muir's natural specimens and notes, original books, letters and photographs belonging to the family, and a variety of personal effects.

Included on the site is the Martinez Adobe. The adobe was constructed in 1849 under the direction of Vincente Martinez and was home to multiple members of the Muir family. The adobe offers a chance to examine the way of life in the valley prior to the Strentzel's settlement.

The 326-acre Mount Wanda portion of the site provides natural areas for visitors to escape from the urban development of the surrounding area. Besides wandering the trails as Muir once did, visitors can attend outings hosted by the park, including bird, wildflower, and full moon walks. Resource management projects on Mount Wanda play a critical role in the park's outreach efforts, using interns and volunteers to monitor, preserve, and restore natural habitats on Mt. Wanda.

The Strentzel-Muir gravesite is located 2 miles south of the main site and is the resting place of John Muir, his wife Louie, her parents John and Louisiana Strentzel, and Muir's daughter and son-in-law, Wanda and Tom Hanna. The gravesite contains an orchard and other trees that date back to Muir's time. For years, the gravesite served as a gathering location and memorial area for many groups prior to the establishment of John Muir National Historic Site.

