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The John Muir Newsletter, Spring 2013

The John Muir Center

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The John Muir Newsletter

THE JOHN MUIR CENTER

MUIR'S TRAVELS

By Ariadna Hernandez

A life full of luxurious traveling is one that many people desire; yet few are able to commit to such a lifestyle. John Muir, the famed conservationist, had a lifetime's supply of travel, though he did not always have comfortable housing. To Muir, however, every place was home, whether it was in the mountains or on the plains. Depending on his moment in life, each area that he visited had a meaning for him; and his reasons for traveling to each one varied as much as the continents themselves. Although he traveled to accomplish many goals during his lifetime, his main reason for traveling so far and wide was for self-contentment. With each trip, he gained more knowledge about the workings of nature, which was exactly what he sought.

According to Muir biographer Donald Worster, "One definition of a tourist is a person traveling for pleasure. That would cover every excursion Muir made throughout his life; in the broadest sense, he was always traveling for pleasure. But the level of pleasure he derived from his travels was very uneven: the best trips brought glimpses of the sublime, the next best improved his understanding of nature's mechanisms, and the least pleasurable meant wearily shuffling past an array of 'important,' man-made

monuments."¹ Most of the journeys Muir made during the years prior to 1879 were for personal pleasure. His famous Thousand Mile Walk, as well as his time up in the mountains and in Yosemite were made to seek God in nature, watching the beauty of His creations as they moved in motion without human influence. All of this began after his eye accident of 1867, at which time which he lamented, "my right eye is gone, closed forever on all God's beauty."² He made a promise to himself that "if God should restore the gift of sight he would use it to study the beauty of creation rather than the contrivances of man."³ Once his sight had been restored, he felt "more anxious to travel than ever."⁴

As Muir traveled through both time and place, he began to better understand the language of nature. He was soon engrossed in the silts of the land, the formation of glaciers, the carvings in rocks, and the habitat of trees. He was "anxious to gain some knowledge of the regions to the northward," so he set out to Alaska.⁵ His objective there was to "observe the power of nature to remake the world through glaciation."⁶ He hiked through the mountains of Alaska, through rain and snow, and noticed that the "smell of the washed ground and the vegetation made every breath a pleasure."⁷ Muir made seven excursions to various areas in Alaska, and spent his

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Depending on Muir's moment in life, each area that he visited had a meaning for him.
- From Muir's writing, it seemed that his favorite country of the entire trip was New Zealand.
- Although his travels had scientific, political, and literary purposes, his journeys were all spent seeking the pleasures one finds in the cathedrals of God.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Muir's Travels	1
Andrea Wulf speaks on "Founding Gardeners" at Pacific	2
Searching for the right word: Muir Journal Transcription Project	3
2014 Muir Symposium Announcement	6
Wild and Scenic Film Fest at Pacific Hosted by Sustaining Pacific and John Muir Center	7

ANDREA WULF SPEAKS ON “FOUNDING GARDENERS” AT PACIFIC

On February 27, prize-winning author Andrea Wulf spoke on the subject of “Founding Gardeners: How the Revolutionary Generation Created an American Eden.” The talk was sponsored by Phi Beta Kappa, the University Library, and John Muir Center and attracted more than eighty faculty, staff, students, and community members, many of the latter members of Master Gardeners.

Born in India of German parents on assignment to the equivalent of our own Peace Corps, Wulf grew up in Germany and earned her first degree in Cultural Studies and Philosophy at the University of Luneburg in 1996. Since then, she has made Britain her home, earning a second advanced degree in the History of Design at the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. In 2005, she published *This Other Eden, Seven Great Gardens and Three Hundred Years of English History*, co-authored with Emma Biegen-Gamal, released by Little Brown and adapted into a six-part mini-series on BBC radio.

In 2008, *Brothers*

Gardeners: Botany, Empire and the Birth of an Obsession was released by William Heinemann in the UK and by Alfred Knopf here in the United States in 2009. It won the American Horticultural Society 2010 Book Award and was long-listed for the Samuel Johnson Prize, the most prestigious non-fiction award in the U. K. In 2011 she published *Founding Gardeners: How the Revolutionary Generation Created an American Eden*, again through Heinemann in the U. K. and Knopf here in the U.S. It not only made the New York Times Best Seller List, but was described by a reviewer in the *Times* as “an illuminating and engrossing new book” by the *Washington Post* as “lively and deeply researched history.” Last year, *Chasing Venus: The Race to Measure the Heavens* appeared in seven languages. Described by the Boston Globe as “a book both astrophysicists and poets can understand,” Wulf retells the story of scientists and philosophers following the infrequent transit of Venus in modern times.

She has received a number of prestigious fellowships in the past decade, including three

years at the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello; a White House History Fellowship through the Organization of American Historians and the White House Historical Association. Currently she is the Eccles British Library Writer-in-Residence and lives in London. Her most recent project and the reason she came to Pacific is her interest in John Muir. She is



Andrea Wulf at Pacific on
February 27, 2013

currently working on “The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt’s New World,” to be published by Knopf in 2015. Von Humboldt’s influence on John Muir will be a chapter in this book.

The talk on “Founding Gardeners”

focused on the impact of John (1699-1777) and son William Bartram (1737-1823) as seed and plant collectors on better known political figures from the Revolutionary generation; notably Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, George Washington, and James Madison. Described by famed Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus as “the greatest natural botanist in the world,” John Bartram’s garden within the city of Philadelphia provided Europeans and Americans with seeds from North American species. Wulf argues that gardening was much more than just a hobby for the four political giants in her study. Planting American species, the design of landscapes, and attitudes about green space generally reflect an Americanized approach quite different from the formal gardens of England and the continent. Connecting the Revolution with ideas of the founding fathers on the ideal farm and garden, Wulf concludes that democracy and an appreciation of American forests and wilderness are part of the formula that evolved through the process and practice of planting colonial and early National gardens.

Wulf will return in 2014 to present on Alexander von Humboldt’s influence on John Muir.

ARCHIVIST'S CORNER

SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT WORD: MUIR JOURNAL TRANSCRIPTION PROJECT

By Michael Wurtz, Archivist
Holt-Atherton Special Collections
University of the Pacific Library

Have you ever wanted to probe deep into the mind of John Muir? Read his own thoughts immediately after he conjured them? How about search his thoughts to see if he ever wrote about bears or avalanches? The staff of Holt-Atherton Special Collections, the home of The John Muir Papers, has started a project to transcribe the Muir journals so we can get in his mind.

For years we have been able to read his thoughts in his books which have been edited and polished for public consumption. The Sierra Club transcribed those books into their website so researchers can read the books online or search for words in the text. Researchers can find this sort of search functionality in Google Books as well.

In 2008, the staff of Holt-Atherton Special Collections had John Muir's correspondence transcribed and scanned for the world to read. The letters are closer to Muir thoughts than the books. The transcriptions not only help with legibility issues of reading Muir's ideas, but also make them searchable for keywords.

A year earlier in 2007, the staff scanned Muir's 78 known journals and put them online too. They were not transcribed, since they consisted primarily of faded pencil and cursive writing, and were occasionally written out in many directions on a single page. Only the most devoted Muir fans and researchers were ready to decipher his writing.

Stephanie LeMenager, Associate Professor of English at UC Santa Barbara, recently took an interest in Muir's journal documenting his trip

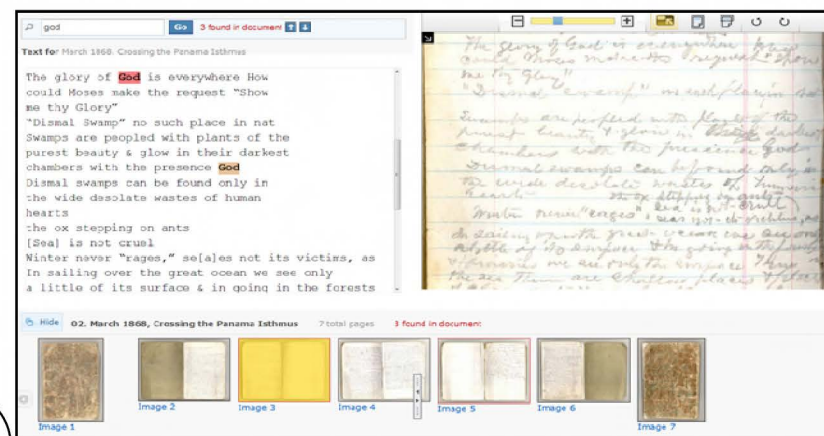
across the Isthmus of Panama in 1868. She meticulously transcribed the 8 pages of Muir's almost illegible writing (the transcription can be found in these pages two years ago). Then we took her transcription and added it to the online journal scans. Now researchers wondering about Muir's mention of "God" in his journals can find, "The glory of God is everywhere. How could Moses make the request, 'show me the glory.'" Earlier, the director of the John Muir Center, Bill Swagerty, worked with students to transcribe for publication the World Tour journals. Although these were only 5 journals of 78, we took it as a beginning.

Fortunately, between Muir's early biographers, William Badé and Linnie Marsh Wolfe, many of Muir's journals were transcribed—obviously not with a computer, but with a typewriter. Badé took some editorial liberties, and Wolfe would sometimes only transcribe bits and pieces of journals, but their intentions were good, and those journal transcriptions were much more legible and accessible for reading and eventual publication.

The Badé and Wolf transcriptions have formed the core of a long-term transcription project that the staff of Holt-Atherton Special Collections has started. With the aid of student workers, we are entering the transcriptions into the online journals. Over the last couple of years, we have added legible and word-searchable text to almost 20 Muir journals.

What can you do to help transcribe the rest of the journals? Visit go.pacific.edu/specialcollections, navigate to Muir's journals, choose a page – any page – of untranscribed journal, and take a crack at it. There is a "comments" link at the bottom of each page to which you can add your new found text. If you feel more comfortable with email, send us what you have along with the journal and page number, and we will add your transcription to our online journals.

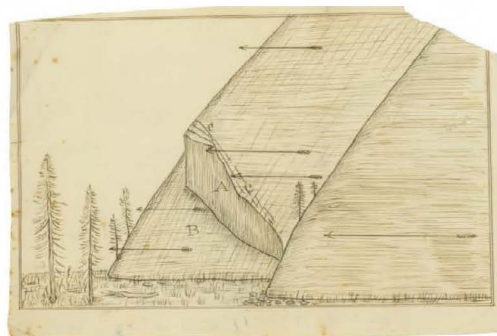
The value of this kind of project is the expanded access to Muir's thoughts as he first experienced them, and to make them word searchable. Join us!



Side-by-side, the legible and word searchable text and a scan of a page from Muir's 1868 journal describing his trip across the Isthmus of Panama. John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. © 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust.

(continued from page 1)

time “wandering and wondering... admiring the magnificent rock and crystal scenery about us. . . .”⁸ His travels throughout Alaska’s inland passage, as well as those in the Gulf of Alaska and along the west coast in the Bering Sea, were for the study of nature and for observing and studying Alaska’s native peoples.



Muir had explored the glacier actions of the Sierra Nevada and had diagramed them carefully. His principal objective for his trips to Alaska was to see the glacial morphology with glaciers still in the picture. James Eastman Shone Collection, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. © 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust.

“Muir himself considered it among the most important [trips] of his life and the fulfillment of a dream of decades.”

Muir’s trip around the world in 1903-1904, though not well-known, is one of his most important, although its “pace and ambitions nearly killed him.”⁹ While in Finland, Muir visited the Forest of Lindula, which was planted by Queen Anna 170 years before Muir arrived.¹⁰ Upon seeing it, Muir wrote that it was the “tallest and most uniform patch of manufactured forest” he had ever seen.¹¹ Since the world-wide trip was mainly for plant study, Muir was excited and interested in seeing these foreign plants. Once the party reached Russia, Muir was once again in his field of study, studying forest after forest. He found the “journey interesting in landscape beauty and in forest.”¹² While Muir was in Russia, he noted that the country was extremely underdeveloped agriculturally. He was thrilled to see wilderness almost everywhere. His “journals are full of eager descriptions of woodland scenes passing before [his] gaze,” which is all

Muir could do, since most of his time from St. Petersburg through Russia to China was spent traveling by rail as a passenger on the Trans-Siberian Railroad.¹³

From Muir’s writing, it seemed that his favorite country of the entire trip was New Zealand. While there, he took up his favorite avocation—botanizing—due to the immense number of plants he found in the botanical gardens.¹⁴ None of Eurasia’s plants “had been as unique or colorful as these, and he had collected nothing to this point.”¹⁵ He spent two days in the botanical gardens of Christchurch, “reveling in New Zealand plants.”¹⁶ The entire world tour was for botanical studies, which Muir had loved since a young student at the University of Wisconsin. He was able to see the extent of the species he had known in the United States and see plants he had never seen before.

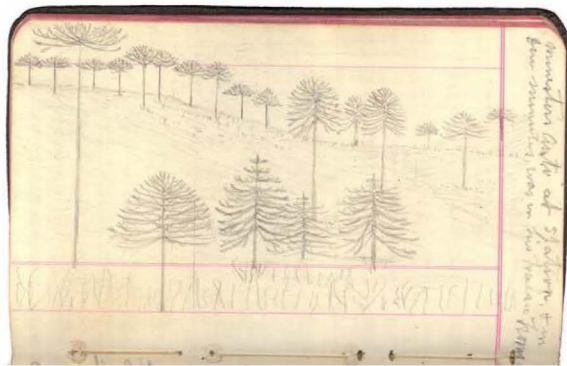


Despite Muir’s revelry for plant life in New Zealand, he did not draw many of its plants in his journal from that trip. The few drawings he did include were of mountains like Mount Raupehu and Hgauhoe. January-May 1904, World Tour, Part V, John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. © 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust.

As a young boy, Muir was influenced by the decorative and descriptive writings of Alexander von Humboldt and Mungo Park. Their colorful stories of trips through South America and Africa (respectively) ignited Muir’s creative imagination and took him to places he had only envisioned.¹⁷ Because Muir had malaria after his Thousand Mile Walk, he was not able to accomplish his goal of visiting South America during his

younger years.¹⁸ As Muir grew older, however, his dream “now became a resolve: a long botanical ramble through...to South America.”¹⁹ Journals of his travels to Chile and Zimbabwe are “emotionally engaged in a way that makes clear how rewarding he found these travels.”²⁰ After his last journey through those mysterious and exciting countries, “Muir himself considered it among the most important [trips] of his life and the fulfillment of a dream of decades.”²¹

It was not until the last years of his life that Muir could make his dreams come true and travel to his long sought-after destinations. In Chile, Muir’s main goal was to find the rare monkey puzzle tree. In Santiago, he went to the botanical gardens to search for information concerning *Araucaria imbricata*.²² In the middle of November, Muir was taken to the “forests [he had] so long wished to see” by a kind American sawmill owner.²³ Once he was among the forests of the *A. imbricata* that he had so long dreamed of, “it seemed familiar.”²⁴



Muir had dreamed of the monkey puzzle tree for so long that once he saw this forest of them in Chile, they “seemed familiar.” November 1911-March 1912, Trip to South America, Part III, and Trip to Africa, John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. © 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust.

There were various reasons Muir wanted to travel to Africa some of which were to “tour one of the only parts of the world he had not yet visited;” “to observe native African flora;” “to see the wildlife of the central African plains;” and, “to reach the headwaters of the Nile.”²⁵ Although there were many reasons to visit the huge continent, Muir’s main mission was to find the enormous *Adansonia digitata*, better known as the African baobab, which he longed to

see.²⁶ Zimbabwe gave Muir the opportunity to see this magnificent tree in person. The day he found the tree was “a wonderful day, wonderful in many ways; one of the greatest of the great tree days of my lucky life.”²⁷ For Muir, the chance to see such rare and glorious trees was reason enough to travel across the world.



Another tree that Muir had longed to see was the Baobab. “One of the greatest of the great tree days of my lucky life.” November 1911-March 1912, Trip to South America, Part III, and Trip to Africa. John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library. ©1984 Muir-Hanna Trust.

Muir wanted to observe the creations and landscapes made by God and he traveled and grew “stronger and richer in the knowledge of God’s earth” in each journey he made.²⁸ His main goal in life was to see, learn, and appreciate all of Nature’s creations until his dying day. Since God allowed him to regain his vision after the accident in 1867, he spent the rest of his time seeing “the truth and beauty inherent in the world.”²⁹ Although his travels had scientific, political, and literary purposes, his journeys were all spent seeking the pleasures one finds in the cathedrals of God.

Ariadna Hernandez was born in Guanajuato, Mexico as the eldest of three daughters. At the age of three her family migrated to the United States. Her father was a field worker and was greatly interested in nature. He transferred his passion of all living creatures to her as a young girl, as well as a love for reading. She graduated from Lincoln High School in Stockton, CA and is now a 3rd year Environmental Science major here at the University of the Pacific.

ENDNOTES

1. Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 377. A map of Muir's global travels is found in Gretel Ehrlich, *John Muir: Nation's Visionary* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2000), pp. 18-19.
2. Michael Branch, *John Muir's Last Journey* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2001) p. xxviii.
3. *ibid.*, p. xxix.
4. Letter from John Muir to Jeanne Carr, 1867 May 2. John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections © 1984 Muir Hanna Trust.
5. John Muir, *Travels in Alaska* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915; 1998 edition) p. 3.
6. Worster, *Passion for Nature*, p. 247.
7. Muir, *Travels in Alaska*, p. 110.
8. *ibid.*, p. 246.
9. Worster, *Passion for Nature*, p. 377.
10. John Muir, *World Tour*, unpublished journals transcribed by Linnie Marsh Wolfe, edited by W. R. Swagerty, John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections © 1984 Muir Hanna Trust, Published in the *John Muir Newsletter*, 6 parts, 2005-2008. See Part I.
11. *World Tour*, Part I.
12. *ibid.*
13. Worster, *Passion for Nature*, p. 380.
14. Muir, *World Tour*, Part V.
15. Worster, *Passion for Nature*, p. 383.
16. Muir, *World Tour*, Part V.
17. Muir references these two explorers in *Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, c. 1912, 1916 ed.), p. 207. Park (1771-1806) was a Scottish surgeon who in 1795 was supported by the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa to discover the course of the River Niger. His book, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* was published in 1799 and was widely read. On Humboldt's influence on Muir and others, see Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006), especially chapters 8-9. Also see Michael Branch, "John Muir's Travels to South America and Africa," in *John Muir: Family, Friends, and Adventures*, ed. Sally M. Miller and Daryl Morrison (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), pp. 249-65.
18. This story is repeated by Muir and his editor, William Frederic Badè in *Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, pp. 360ff; and in *Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1916), pp. 143-68.
19. Branch, *John Muir's Last Journey*, p. xxix.
20. *ibid.*, p. 102.
21. *ibid.*, p. xxiii.
22. *ibid.*, p. 110.
23. *ibid.*, p. 114.
24. *ibid.*, p. 115.
25. *ibid.*, p. 129.
26. *ibid.*
27. *ibid.*, p. 147.
28. Muir, *World Tour*, Part III.
29. Worster, *Passion for Nature*, p. 112.



SAVE THE DATE

John Muir Symposium,
March 21-22, 2014

Join us on the 150th anniversary of the Yosemite Grant, the 100th anniversary of Muir's death, and the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Wilderness Act to revisit John Muir's life and legacy. University of the Pacific will host the 60th California History Institute on the Stockton campus from Friday, March 21, through Saturday, March 22. Expect to hear papers by new Muir scholars currently working Muir's legacy, as well as several familiar names who have become regulars at Muir symposia. Plenary sessions and keynotes will be given by three scholars now living in the U. K.: Terry Gifford, Graham White and Andrea Wulf. A special exhibit on the history of the Muir Papers and their present locations is planned, as well as coordinated field trips before and after the symposium. If interested in presenting or attending the conference, please contact :

wswagerty@pacific.edu

**WILD AND SCENIC ENVIRONMENTAL
FILM FEST AT PACIFIC
HOSTED BY SUSTAINING PACIFIC &
JOHN MUIR CENTER**

WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL

A CLIMATE OF CHANGE

Hosted by Sustaining Pacific and
University of the Pacific John Muir Center

Thursday, April 11th, 2013
6-8:30PM

University of the Pacific, 3601 Pacific Avenue, Wendell Phillips Center #140

6:00-6:30 PM Reception • 6:30-7:30 PM Films • Intermission • 7:45-8:30 PM Films

Free and Open to the Public

Friends of the Lower Calaveras River
Sierra Club
Delta-Sierra Group

CLIF

patagonia

Mother Jones

Stockton Earth Day Festival
Boggs Tract Community Farm

mounted by partners in WPC's courtyard and films selected by students from an available list of over sixty documentaries will be shown in WPC 140 on campus on Thursday, April 11 from 6 PM to 8:30 PM. The films are all short and range from following "The Man Who Lived on His Bike" across an entire year to a biography of Georgena Terry, founder of Terry Bicycles, who revolutionized that industry by creating a frame specific to a woman's body; to an Afghan-produced film, "Skateistan," highlighting co-educational opportunities for learning to skateboard in that part of the world; to "Timber," a film by Adam Fisher on responsible versus irresponsible use of natural resources; to "The Way Home," a journey in Yosemite National Park with the Amazing Grace 50+ Club of Los Angeles; to "Chasing Water," a film based on photographer Pete McBride's attempt to follow irrigation water from his family's Colorado ranch down to the sea along the Colorado River.

The event is free and open to the public with refreshments provided.



Dr. Shanna Eller, Director of Sustainability at Pacific and Lucy Kramer, an Environmental Studies major at Pacific, together with W. Swagerty of Muir Center, recently applied for a grant to host an environmental film festival through the South Yuba Citizens' League (SYRCL) of Ne-

vada City, CA. Supported by Patagonia, CLIF Bar, Mother Jones, and Sierra Nevada Brewing, partners with Pacific include Friends of the Lower Calaveras, The Delta-Sierra Group within the Sierra Club, Stockton Earth Day Festival, and the Boggs Tract Community Farm. Exhibits will be

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THE JOHN MUIR CENTER

The John Muir Center promotes the study of John Muir and environmentalism at the University of the Pacific and beyond.

Center Objectives

As one of California's most important historical figures, John Muir (1838-1914) was a regional naturalist with global impact. His papers, housed in the library's [Holt-Atherton Special Collections](#), are among the University's most important resources for scholarly research.

Recognizing the need both to encourage greater utilization of the John Muir Papers by the scholarly community, and the need to promote the study of California and its impact upon the global community, the John Muir

Center was established in 1989 with the following objectives:

- To foster a closer academic relationship between Pacific and the larger community of scholars, students and citizens interested in regional and environmental studies.
- To provide greater opportunities for research and publication by Pacific faculty and students.
- To offer opportunities for out-of-classroom learning experiences.
- To promote multi-disciplinary curricular development.

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