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## John Muir Newsletter, Spring 1993

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# John Muir Newsletter

spring 1993

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# **1993 EARTH DAY CELEBRATES THE MUIR IMAGE**

#### by Janene Ford

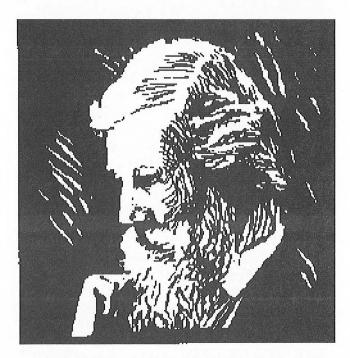
On a clear, sunny spring day the Earth Day Conservation Fair in Sacramento attracted thousands of people including large groups of school children. Sponsored by the California Department of Conservation, many organizations were invited to participate by setting up booths in front of the Capitol showing various aspects of recycling, alternative energy, conservation, and other reflections on "The Muir Image." The University of the Pacific, the John Muir National Historical Site, the Sierra Club and a number of government agencies such as the California Conservation Corps and Cal Trans were represented.

Two staff members of the UOP Library, this author and Rachel Fenske, set up a display on The John Muir Papers and answered questions for visitors and distributed a handout. Their interaction with the younger students revealed that several children thought that John Muir invented Earth Day. Many visitors expressed great interest in the photographs of pages from Muir's journals, sketches, and correspondence, People seemed fascinated with the photographs of two of Muir's inventions, the bed and study desk.

Many of John Muir's great-grandchildren and a few of the great-great-grandchildren were present and received framed proclamations and attended a family picnic. Allison Lincoln, thirteen year old daughter of Lynne Hanna Lincoln of Dixon, wrote a poem about her grandfather and how he might feel about the earth today; it was read by Bill Hanna of Napa during the mid-day ceremony.

Some of the crowd wore T-shirts with the words "The Muir Image" emblazoned on their backs. Entertainment, music, jugglers, and happy children carrying give-away shoe strings, pencils, tree seedlings, business cards, pamphlets, bags, and key rings marked the day.

It is heartening to know that "the Muir Message" is not only still relevant, but is especially thriving in California. Those of us who work intimately with Muir's original journals, books and other papers on a daily basis see serious scholars, authors, and students undertaking



research, but seldom see young children or have the opportunity to show them the wealth of materials that are in our keeping.

Extra copies of the handout are available. If readers would like one, please send a stamped self-addressed envelope to the Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Libraries, Stockton, CA 95211.

#### CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED FOR THE NEWSLETTER

As in earlier issues of this *Newsletter*, the staff wishes to invite its subscribers and readers to submit news, announcements, reviews and information to the *Newsletter* for consideration for publication. It is the goal of this *Newsletter* to keep its readers informed of all environmental news so that we can be as aware of relevant activities as possible. Please share your information with us so that we can spread the word. The editor welcomes your submissions and will determine whether they may be published in a forthcoming issue.

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Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West, by William Cronon. New York: W. W. Norton, 1991, xxiii + 530 pp., maps, illus., bibl., index.

#### Reviewed by Roderick Frazier Nash,

[Editor's note: With this issue, we inaugurate a policy of occasionally reprinting book reviews of noteworthy books dealing with the environment. The following review is reprinted from the American Historical Review with the kind permission of the Review and of the book reviewer. It appeared in the AHR 97 (June 1992): 939.]

In Nature's Metropolis William Cronon continues a scholarly career dedicated to demonstrating what history can learn from ecology. Cronon's first major book, the celebrated Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England (1983), examined environmental modification immediately before and after the initial contact of European settlers with the northeastern coast. Here, and in the present volume, Cronon points out that what we call "nature" is a complex mosaic of original and constructed, people-caused conditions. Obviously original or, in Cronon's terms, "first nature" (p. 264), determined the pre-human environment. But thereafter, the most powerful force shaping the ecosystem derived from human ambition and human ingenuity. Cronon's goal for environmental history is very close to that of ecology: understanding the interrelationships between mankind and the natural world.

In the book at hand. Cronon shifts his focus several centuries later and several thousand miles westward from colonial New England. His narrative revolves around the city of Chicago, but his thesis is neither this metropolis nor any city can be understood apart from its environmental and economic hinterland,. In the case of Chicago, that region was nothing less than a huge slice of North America extending from the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains -the "Great West."

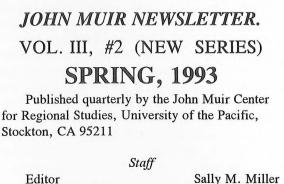
Cronon takes pains to "tell the city-country story as a unified narrative" (p. xiv). Ecology-like, he integrates rather than separates. Constantly he emphasizes that urban and rural areas are parts of an interconnected landscape and share an interconnected history. The "environment," Cronon argues, is not jut nature. Environmental historians must study urban and economic developments as well. History, like ecology, should strive for seamlessness. So, Cronon writes, "The history of the Great West is a long dialogue between the place we call the city and the place we call the country" (p. 54).

Today, as the centennial of his controversial essay on the American frontier approaches in 1993, Frederick Jackson Turner has apparently become the whipping boy of every Western historian. Cronon is gracious about it, but he follows suit. His principal complaint is that Turner persuaded several generations of Americans that the frontier, way out there, had nothing to do with the urban civilization thousands of miles to the east. The frontier was the new world, and by the time cities appeared it had vanished. Cronon does not see it this way. The frontier, or as he calls it "the country," is linked commercially and, in a real sense ecologically, to "the city." For Turner, in other words, the isolation of the frontier explained American development. For Cronon the frontier was never isolated. The West was not a wilderness but part of an urban empire.

*Nature's Metropolis* sweeps from the 1830s, when Chicago (the place of wild garlic) took shape as a white community, to 1893 when the city on the lake hosted the World's Fair (at which, parenthetically, Turner delivered his famous frontier address).

As might be expected in this kind of integrative book, Cronon writes about a wide range of subjects. Most of them have been treated in more detail by others, but Cronon's forte is synthesis. We learn in his book about railroads, reapers, refrigerated meat cars, grain elevators, credit and bankruptcy networks, and futures market. These chapters are organized around specific resources: grain, lumber and beef. In each case Cronon shows how the chains of causation that altered, and he is frank to point out, devastated some environments, extend from the frontier through Chicago to Eastern European markets. The buffalo gave way to cows, the native prairie grasses to wheat, and the majestic white pine to the desolate Cutover Lands. Cronon is sensitive to the liabilities as well as the

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Editor Center Director Sally M. Miller R.H. Limbaugh

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A Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations, by Clive Ponting. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991, i-xiv + 432 pp., maps. graphs, bib., index.

#### Reviewed by Dan Flores, Hammond Professor of History, University of Montana

Clive Ponting's A Green History of the World sets a challenging task for itself -- to tell in a single 400 page volume the environmental history of our planet from the spread of gathering-hunting societies across the globe 25,000 years ago through the pressing environmental issues of the late twentieth century. John Muir, were he alive today, would find this book valuable but perhaps too utilitarian in focus, too short on values and soaring inspirational language. Aldo Leopold, I suspect, would react very favorably to Ponting's effort at a global and holistic treatment including his heavy reliance on statistical data -- but like Muir might wonder what role an environmental ethic (particularly the Land Ethic) plays in Ponting's story.

The answer is: not much. Looking at the sweep of human history, Ponting sees the accelerating press of human population and major technological "ratcheteffects" like the Neolithic Revolution and the Industrial Revolution as far more central to the real story of environmental history. In sharp contrast to books like Clarence Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, Roderick Nash's *The Rights of Nature*, Max Oelschlaeger's *The Idea of Wilderness*, or J. Baird Callicott's various articles exploring comparative environmental ethics and values, Ponting appears to believe that the various ways humans have thought about nature have really made previous little practical difference on the long-term story of environmental history. After digesting the mass of data in this book, I think that he may well be right.

Without being preachy or heavy-handed about it, A Green History of the World takes readers into the heart of the historical debate about humans and the planet. Is there an evolving environmental crisis? The trends of history suggest that, while many of the specific issues we face are nothing new, there is a long-term, unfolding crisis. Viewing the arguments of scholars like Lynn White, Jr., who suggests that the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition are the cause, Barry Commoner's idea that the new technology is the culprit, and Paul Erhlich's belief that the swelling human population is the problem, Ponting seems to rank White's causation a distant third.

It is not that the diverse range of human belief systems

about nature -- the animism of primary cultures, the various Far Eastern religions, Judeo-Christian traditions, the Scientific Revolution, capitalism, or Marxism -- have not influenced the nuances of the human/environment relationships. They have, and in ways that are important to the quality of both the environment and of human life. But the fact is that despite the wide range of values and beliefs that these ways of thinking represent, history provides examples of societies adhering to all of them that have destroyed nature and undermined themselves. Animistic beliefs did not prevent the Paleolithic hunters, the residents of Easter Island, the Maya or the Sumerians from bringing their worlds crashing down on them. Nor have Taoism or Buddhism prevented large-scale environmental devastation in China or India, any more than Christianity, capitalism, or Marxism have in the modern West.

What Ponting's examination of la longue durée demonstrates instead is that since gathering-hunting societies filled up the available space on the planet by about 10,000 years ago, the press of human population has fostered an efflorescence of ethnological "fixes" to enable more and more of us to survive. It took roughly two million years to build up a planetary population of four million of us at the climax of our lives as gatherer-hunters. Agriculture boosted that population to 200 million within just 8,000 years. For 1500 years after Christ, the exchange of epidemic diseases between formerly isolated human gene pools kept the world's population from mushrooming. But as populations genetically resistant to those diseases have evolved, and as the Industrial Revolution and a global economy have accelerated the pace of technological innovation, the human population has inundated the Earth like a spreading mold, fouling water, air, and land in a process that 10,000 years of history has long since internalized. The human population reached the one billion mark in 1825. Within a century there were two billion; by 1960, three billion; by 1975, four billion. We humans surged to more than five billion by the later 1980s.

Faced with such a scenario, Ponting asserts, modern environmental legislation has been "little more than cosmetic" (p. 400). While this book provides us with no reason to be optimistic, it does seem to clarify a few important issues. One is that our nostalgia for an environmental Golden Age is misplaced unless we are willing to reach 10,000 years into the past for a global model. The second is that reducing the human population by the 99% that the model would require is, frankly, an ecological and certainly a moral impossibility. It seems to me that Ponting is suggesting that the technology that "ratcheted" us here is now probably our only hope for saving our skins.

## JOHN MUIR IN NEW ENGLAND

by Ron Limbaugh

(Editor's Note: Following the death of his father-inlaw, John Strentzel, and the reorganization of the family orchard business in the Alhambra Valley of California, John Muir made plans for a European trip that would revive his creative energies. His wife "Louie" encouraged him; she would stay home with the two children while he and his Scottish friend William Keith, the San Franciso landscape painter, would revisit the Scottish moors they had last seen nearly a half-century before. In the spring of 1893 they made plans to travel separately to New York, then rendezvous there and sail jointly to Liverpool. The plans went awry, however, when Muir reached the East Coast. Robert Underwood Johnson, associate editor of Century and Muir's acting literary agent, wanted to introduce him to the eastern literary establishment. The result was a whirlwind tour that dazzled Muir but delayed his departure for Europe.

The following is an excerpt from a forthcoming book entitled John Muir and Stickeen: the Evolution of a Dog Story. It is used by permission of the author.)

Muir's eastern visit was intended as a brief stop en route to Europe. But Johnson converted it into a sixweeks celebrity tour, with Muir as the reluctant debutante. With Johnson opening doors and directing the agenda, Muir found himself the center of attention, a backwoods rustic with a repertoire of colorful anecdotes. He performed dutifully, meeting the social and intellectual elite, stuffing himself at banquets, and telling stories.

A visit with John Burroughs was one of the first items on Muir's agenda. Only a year older, yet in 1983 much better known than Muir, Burroughs was latenineteenth century America's most popular nature writer.<sup>1</sup> He was a hesitant host, but at Johnson's insistance he agreed to meet the visiting naturalist at "Slabsides," Burroughs' rustic home near Esopus, New York. Later known by their mutual acquaintances as "The Two Johns," Burroughs and Muir became fond friends despite their contrasting personalities. Muir was an incessant talker whose wiry frame seemed to thrive on nervous energy in contrast to the portly Sage of Slabsides, who had acquired more conventional sleeping and eating habits.<sup>2</sup> At their first meeting Burroughs was condescending, describing Muir as "an interesting man with the Western look upon him," but a tiring conversationalist. "You must not be in a hurry," he wrote, "or have any pressing duty, when you start his stream of talk and adventure. Ask him to tell you his famous dog story ... and you get the whole theory of glaciation thrown in."3

Moving north to Brahmin country, Johnson and Muir spent several days in and around Boston. They had a delightful day in the company of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, famed Civil War colonel of a black regiment, author and advocate of women's rights. He escorted them on a Cambridge cultural tour which included the homes of James Russell Lowell and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, both poets Muir knew well from the books in his personal library. At Harvard Muir was introduced to a number of prominent faculty, including Josiah Royce, the California philosopher, and Francis Parkman, prominent American historian whose books Muir read avidly. But the writer whose work he knew best was Charles S. Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum and author of the multi-volume Silva of North America. At his home in nearby Brookline Sargent hosted a banquet with Muir the honored guest. Writing his family later, Muir said he had to repeat the dog story "I don't know how often".4

More banquets and story-telling followed. At a dinner party in Manchester, New Hampshire, wrote Muir, "Sarah Orne Jewett was there, and all was delightful. Here, of course, Johnson made me tell that dog story as if that were the main result of glacial action and all my studies, but I got in a good deal of ice-work ... and never had better listeners."<sup>5</sup>

A quick pilgrimage to Concord highlighted Muir's New England visit. Johnson took him to all the shrines: Concord Bridge, Hawthorne's "Old Manse," the Alcott residence, the graves of Emerson and Thoreau on "Author's Hill" in Sleepy Hollow Cemetary, and, of course, Walden Pond, an easy "saunter" from town. After "a delightful P.M." with Emerson's son Edward Waldo and his father-in-law Judge John S. Keyes, where the dog story doubtless surfaced again, the two visitors caught the night train back to Boston.<sup>6</sup>

The New England tour concluded, Muir and Johnson returned to New York, where a final round of parties and story-telling delayed his departure for Europe. At Gramercy Park Muir dined at the family estate of Gifford Pinchot. In a letter home he described the scene:

"Here and at many other places I had to tell the story of the minister's dog. Everybody seems to think it wonderful for the views it gives of the terrible crevasses of the glaciers as well as for the recognition of danger and the fear and joy of the dog. I must have told it at least twelve times at the request of Johnson or others who had previously heard it.... When I am telling it at the dinner-tables, it is curious to see how eagerly the liveried servants listen from behind screens, half-closed doors, etc."<sup>7</sup>

The six weeks Muir spent in the East ended with his departure for Europe late in June, 1893--without William Keith, who had tired of waiting and sailed alone. But Muir could look back with no small satisfaction: he had mingled with some of the best minds of the continent; he had come as a stranger and had been

(continued on page 7)

# JAPANESE JOURNALIST RESEARCHES MUIR'S LIFE AND WORK

Shigeyuki Okajima, Deputy Directory of the Commentary Department for The Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan's (and the world's) largest daily newspaper, was in the United States recently on an Eisenhower Fellowship as special correspondent for global environmental issues. This was a return trip to this country; in the early 1980s he spent a year in the U.S. as visiting scholar at the University of Washington. On his latest trip he toured American archival institutions and visited environmental organizations to learn about this country's green movement, and in particular, to study the life and work of John Muir. A recipient of the Global 500 Award from a United Nations agency in 1988, he is a counselor for the Nature Conservation and Wild Bird Societies of Japan, and a committee member of the Japanese Alpine Club. In 1990 he published a Japanese-language history of the American environmental movement, and a year later wrote Only One Earth, an English-language textbook for Japanese high school students.

His recent tour included a visit to the Holt-Atherton Library at UOP, where he discussed Japan's environmental movement and his special interest in Muir's contributions to the concept of a global environmental ethics. He presented the library with a copy of his book and with copies of several environmental articles he has published in Americanlanguage newspapers. The green movement in Japan, though still in its formative stages, is gathering momentum and will soon be a major force on the international environmental scene.

### **NEWS NOTES**

**Richard F. Fleck**, well-known for his work on Thoreau and Muir, has recently edited a book on Native American writings, soon to be published by Three Continents Press. Entitled *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, it presents essays on six Native American novelists who have emerged as internationally acclaimed writers. The editor, formerly with Teikyo Loretto Heights University in Denver, in July will become Dean of Denver's Community College. Oxford University Press is publishing a reference book for young adults, *Earthkeepers: Observers and Protectors of Nature*. Scheduled for publication in the fall of 1993, it will include an article on Muir and a photo from the Holt-Atherton Library.

John Muir T-Shirts are available from the John Muir Memorial Association. Depicting Muir leaning on a hiking stick, the T-shirt project is a fund-raiser to support the work of the John Muir National Historic Site. A shirt can be purchased with a check for \$14,00, made out and sent to the John Muir Memorial Association, c/o Dianna Ceballos, 2220 Spring Lake Drive, Martinez, CA 94553, (510) 680-7561.

Another movement is afoot to "Save Mount Shasta." This has long been a goal of environmental activists who recognize the need for saving Shasta's biodiverse habitat from further urban-industrial encroachment. John Muir was one of the first to publicize Shasta's natural treasures, and if alive today would doubtless endorse efforts to protect the resource. The "Save Mount Shasta" Committee is asking for endorsements to a resolution seeking to designate Mount Shasta as a "National Monument, a World Heritage Site, and World Biosphere Reserve." For the full text of the resolution, see the May-June issue of The Compendium Newsletter, edited by Nancy Pearlman (P.O. Box 351419, LA, 90035-9119 (310) 559-9160), or write to the "Save Mount Shasta" Committee, P.O. Box 1143, Mount Shasta, CA 96067.

#### RAILROAD RESEARCH GRANT AVAILABLE

Railroad archives are a rich source of information for the study of corporate America and the labor movement in the formative years of industrial development. John Muir's connections to the Southern Pacific Railroad in the Harriman Era have been explored by Richard Orsi, who is working on a book-length monograph on the subject, and there is plenty of room for other scholars to study the nexus between railroads and conservation politics. In this context, scholars should take note of research opportunities at the James J. Hill Reference Library, which will award a number of grants of up to \$2,000 to support research in the James J. Hill and Louis W. Hill papers. The deadline for applications is November 1, 1993, and the awards will be announced in early 1994. For more information, contact W. Thomas White, Curator, James J. Hill Reference Library, 80 West Fourth Street, St. Paul, MN 55102.

### GRANT FUNDING AVAILABLE FROM CDE TO PROMOTE ENVIRON-MENTAL EDUCATION

The California Department of Education is a statewide agency actively engaged in promoting environmental education through programs that encourage environmental literacy among teachers and students from kindergarten through grade twelve. At the heart of this effort is the Environmental Education Grant Program, funded by the purchase of personalized license plates. Generally, twothirds of the funds are awarded through competition for grants among environmental educators throughout the State; the remainder goes to state-priority projects which primarily focus on curricular or programmatic development and implementation. Four categories of competitive grants are usually offered: Mini-Grants (up to \$3,000); and Implementation, Site/Facilities and Networking Grants (up to \$15,000). Applicants must show proof of matching contributions, and submit a proposal that demonstrates that the project will continue to benefit the target audience after state funds have been expended.

The Environmental Education Advisory Council reviews state-priority proposals after an initial screening by the Department of Education. Given a favorable review, the applicant's agency is asked to submit a full proposal.

To obtain a competitive or state-priority grant application, call the Science and Environmental Education Unit, within the California Department of Education, (916) 653-7026.

### A NATIONAL MONUMENT CELEBRATES A MILESTONE

(Editor's Note: In keeping with past policies, the John Muir Newsletter continues to note important news and anniversaries related to our National Parks and Monuments. As the proud bearer of the name John Muir, the Newsletter seeks to spread the word of news that would be of interest to Muir.)

Death Valley National Monument was created by executive order 2028, a proclamation signed by President Herbert Hoover on February 11, 1933. The Monument was established for "... the preservation of the unusual features of scenic, scientific and educational interest therein" and "... the proper care, management and protection of unusual features of scientific interest." Sixtieth anniversary celebrations were held during February. They included a reunion of the Civilian Conservation Corps employees who worked in Death Valley during the 1930s. A reunion of former Death Valley employees was also held, and they have appeared for a question-andanswer session with current employees and staff concerning the history of the Monument and its preservation. A play was presented about Shorty Harris who figures prominently in Death Valley' history, and a keynote speech was given by George H. Hildebrand, author of *Borax Pioneer: Francis Marion Smith*. In addition, exhibits of historic photographs and displays were on view.

### WHERE TO FIND SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT JOHN MUIR

Finding information about Muir's life and times is a time-consuming task outside the standard sources, such as the microform edition of the Muir Papers, the biographies by Frederick Turner, Michael Cohen and Stephen Fox, as well as the Houghton-Mifflin publications of Muir's writings, largely reproduced in recent years by the University of Wisconsin Press. For Muir scholars the best reference tools are the published bibliography by William and Maymie Kimes (John Muir: A Reading Bibliography), and The Guide to the Microform Edition of the John Muir Papers, edited by R.H. Limbaugh and Kirsten Lewis. Other information on Muir can be found in virtually thousands of minor sources, including many which are often overlooked. For example, John G. Lemmon, a Muir contemporary, published an article in the Pacific Rural Press (September 29, 1877), that describes his trip with J.D. Hooker, Asa Gray and Muir in the High Sierra. This Newsletter will keep Muir scholars informed of other sources, and the editor encourages scholars who know of obscure sources to let readers know via this publication.

#### (Nature's Metropolis cont. from page 2)

benefits of development., He makes it clear that environmental responsibility must be premised on recognition of, as he puts it, "the ecological consequences of our own lives" (p. xv). It follows that even as residents of intensely urban areas, like Chicago, we must accept responsibility for what happens in ecosystems far way. William Cronon is to be applauded for writing a book that is at once scholarly and relevant to understanding and solving serious contemporary environmental problems.

#### (Muir in New England continued from page 4)

welcomed as a celebrity and member of the intellectual elite. Yet like previous westerners who came East in triumph, among eastern literati, Muir's popularity as a story-teller tended to overshadow his reputation as a significant writer. Confirmation of his literary skills would have to await the publication in 1894 of his first book, *The Mountains of California*.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Judson D. McGehee, "The Nature Essay as a Literary Genre: an Intrinsic Study of the Works of Six English and American Nature Writers," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Michigan, 1958), 27.

<sup>2</sup>The Life and Letters of John Burroughs, ed. by Clara Barrus, II, 120.

<sup>3</sup><u>Ibid</u>., I, 340, 360.

<sup>4</sup>Muir to Wanda Muir, 14 June 1893, in *Dear Papa: Letters between John Muir and his Daughter Wanda*. Edited by Jean Hanna Clark and Shirley Sargent (Fresno, CA: Panorama West Books, c1985), 36-37; William F. Badé, *Life and Letters of John Muir*, II (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 270.

<sup>5</sup><u>Ibid</u>., II, 271.

<sup>6</sup>John S. Keyes, Diary, v. 12, p. 24, 8 June 1893, in Concord Public Library, Concord, Mass.

<sup>7</sup>Badé, Life and Letters, II, 265-266.

# LAW AND DISORDER CONFERENCE A QUALITY EVENT

The three days following Muir's birthday April 21 included Earth Day (see article in this issue), and it also provided the occasion for the 46th annual California History Institute. This year's theme: "Law and Disorder: Public Policy and Civil Unrest in California," was explored in a series of sessions that ranged from Northern California Indian massacres to the Visalia Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s to the Los Angeles Riots following the Rodney King case. Richard Maxwell Brown, Beekman Professor of History at the University of Oregon and a national authority on violence in America, culminated the academic sessions with a comprehensive look at California's turbulent history in its modern context. On Saturday a field trip to UC Berkeley, led by members of the campus police in the 1960s, toured and discussed People's Park and other sites familiar to activists during Berkeley's stormiest years.

Next year the Institute will shift gears to address "California and the Pacific Rim: Past, Present, and Future." For information contact Professor Dennis Flynn, Department of Economics, UOP. Watch the *Newsletter* for details as they become available.

### **BE A MEMBER OF THE JOHN MUIR CENTER FOR REGIONAL STUDIES**

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Please join us by completing the following form and returning it, along with a \$15. check made payable to The John Muir Center for Regional Studies, University of the Pacific, 3601 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95211.

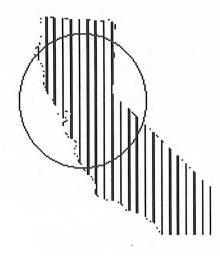
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# John Muir Newsletter

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**IN THIS ISSUE:** 

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