



## THE EARLY LECTURES BY JOHN MUIR

In terms of public lectures by John Muir, there were not all that many, apparently the result of his discomfort in front of large audiences. As described by Lucy M. Washburn of the California State Normal School at San Jose, in an article she wrote for the *San Jose Mercury Herald* (1914): *Once or twice from the normal school platform the school heard his vivid story, but John Muir was as hard to trap as a lecturer as one of his wild deer; he had an aversion, never overcome, to speaking to a large audience. It was only in some smaller classroom, with a sympathetic group of the teachers, or around President [Charles Herman] Allen's fireside, with a child on his knee, or in the never-to-be-forgotten rides to Mt. Hamilton that the story of his mountain life came forth freely.*<sup>1</sup>

The following chronological list of the early lectures by John Muir allows one to further recognize his friendships with, not only Reverend IE Dwinell, but a number of the faculty of the California State Normal School at San Jose. It is of interest to note that Muir's early public presentations are limited to two congregational churches, one temperance hall and one academic institution of the San Francisco Bay area, a Sunday School Assembly in Yosemite Valley. In addition to these early lectures based in California, John Muir delivered several lectures in Portland, Oregon and one lecture in Vancouver, Washington.

As previously mentioned, one location where Muir presented several lectures was the Sacramento Literary Institute, founded by Reverend IE Dwinell. In fact, it was at the Literary Institute on Tuesday, January 25, 1876, that a nervous John Muir presented his first public lecture titled "*The Glaciers of California.*" A description of Muir's first lecture was penned for the *Sacramento Daily Union* and reads as follows: *The fifth lecture of the Literary Institute course was delivered at the Congregational Church last evening by John Muir. To our surprise, we found a large audience present despite the inclement weather and the bad condition of footways.*

*Those who came out were more than repaid for the trouble of attending - they reaped, indeed, a rich reward - hearing one of California's best geologists and most adventurous of scientific explorers of the high Sierra ranges. Mr. Muir is an ardent devotee of geological science, and comes fresh from six summers' wanderings and studies in the higher ranges of the Sierra Nevada mountains with a portfolio titled with valuable notes, a cabinet of proof curiosities and a perfectly clear and invincibly established theory of the formation of the wonder valleys of California, the growth of climate and the degradation of our mountain ranges. He is a young man of Scotch birth, bearing the accent strongly on his tongue, wedded to his favorite science, and possessed of remarkably simple but conclusive reasoning powers. The lecture was his first attempt, although he has shown brilliantly in magazines here and at the East, upon his favorite subjects, his last being an illustrated contribution to Harper on the subject of California's ancient and present glaciers. He said he ventured upon the lecture with trepidation, he had never lectured, was not gifted in delivery, and was not certain that he should not utterly fail. Such an introduction fell dismally upon the audience; but the moment he entered upon his subject all doubt of his success vanished. He forgot himself and his audience, only remembering that he was to make clear some wondrous-mysteries, and to unfold to those who listened the story of the six years he has spent in the mountains, reading their lives and tracing alike their growth and destruction. His positiveness was so simple, fresh and artless that it scarcely needed the proof with which he fortified every position. His manner was so easy and so social, his style so severely plain and so homely his language and logic as often to provoke a smile, while the judgment gave hearty approval to the points he made. Indeed, Mr. Muir was at one the most, unartistic and refreshing, the most unconventional and positive lecturer we have yet had in Sacramento. He was profoundly entertaining, and showed convincingly that while a devotee of science, he was no mere enthusiast; while plain and unartificial, that yet he found beauty, grandeur, God, in all nature, and was at once a student, a thinker, and a practical searcher in the archives of the rocks, whose labors will bring forth benefits to his adopted State. He illustrated his lecture with diagrams on blackboards, and by Keith's superb painting of the headwaters of the Merced river, which he pronounced as topographically correct as it is beautiful and artistic.*

*He defined a glacier - a current of ice derived from snow, flowing down mountain sides exactly as streams descend to the valleys. He sketched the growth of glaciers from the birth of the vapor of the sea, to its congealing on the mountain tops, its descent in fleecy clouds, the fall of the avalanche, the pressure*

*in the canyons, the melting and freezing and impacting, until solid glacial ice is formed, hard as cast iron, hundreds of feet in depth, miles in extent, and yet flowing downward as surely as a river moves to its mouth, but so slowly as to be unnoticed except after accurate measurement.*

*He was the discoverer of the existing glaciers of California, and these he sketched, they being 65 in number. He described their location, peculiarities and movement. One, the largest, he had under observation 47 days, and by stakes placed in lines marked its progress, and found it moved 46 inches in that time. That was the slowest ride he ever had, but by way of contrast, he told how he was once shot through space upon the nose of an avalanche at the rate of a mile a minute, and declared the old-fashioned flight on angel's wings could be nothing compared to this ride upon the verge of a Mount Whitney avalanche. He took up the question of ancient glaciers in the Sierras, marked out their paths, aligned the lateral moraines which marked the glacial current, produced the evidences of the grinding forces of the glaciers which one day covered the Sierras from the highest points to the valleys of the rivers like a vast sheet, dilated upon the glacial pavements of the Merced mountains, and finally entered upon an elaborate but perfectly clear description of the formation of the Yosemite and similar valleys, showing them to be the direct result of glacial action, and not, as has been alleged, due to cataclysmal effects. This branch of the lecture was deeply interesting, and though intricate, was made so plain that scarce the dullest intelligence could fail to comprehend it. An hour and a half having elapsed he closed, but the audience demanding that he should continue, he said he would "talk" a little about the degradation of the mountains, which he proceeded to do in a manner at once profound and beautiful. His sketch of glacial action, and the comparison of the wearing down of the mountains by the great agencies of God - who is molding the earth daily to greater beauty - to the work of the skilled mechanic, who cuts and carves and fashions and finishes, rose to the poetical in its figurative purity.*

*At the close of the lecture large numbers of citizens seized the occasion to go forward and congratulate Mr. Muir, and thank him heartily for the pleasure and instruction he had given them.<sup>2</sup>*



First Congregational Church of Sacramento. Photograph courtesy of the  
First Congregational Church of Sacramento, California.

Beyond this first presentation at the Sacramento Literary Institute, the remaining early lectures by John Muir extend over a six-year period (1876 - 1881) and are outlined in chronological order as follows:

On Friday, February 25, 1876, John Muir presented a lecture on “Mountain Building” at the California State Normal School at San Jose. As described in the *San Jose Patriot*: *The lecturer, by numerous diagrams, illustrated the structure and progress of glaciers, especially those which eroded the Yosemite Valley.*<sup>3</sup>

On Tuesday, March 28, 1876, John Muir presented a lecture to the public at the First Congregational Church of Oakland, where John Knox McLean served as Pastor. A brief description of this lecture was published in the *Daily Alta California* and reads as follows: *The first of the popular course of lectures, under the auspices of the Oakland Library Association, was delivered last evening, by John Muir, Esq., at the First Congregational Church. The subject was “The Glaciers of California,” of which the highly interesting lecturer said there are sixty-five in active life, the most beautiful, a group of five, being on Mount Ritter. The audience was large and well pleased.*<sup>4</sup>

John Muir briefly mentions his lectures at the California State Normal School in San Jose and the First Congregational Church in Oakland in a letter to his sister, Sarah, grumbling of his discontent for an upcoming lecture tour to support his first book.

*To Sarah Muir Galloway*

*1419 Taylor St., San Francisco April 17th, 1876*

*My first book is taking shape now, and is mostly written, but still far from complete. I hope to see it in print, rubbed, and scrubbed, and elaborated, some time next year.*

*Among the unlooked-for burdens fate is loading upon my toil-doomed shoulders, is this literature and lecture tour. I suppose I will be called upon for two more addresses in San Francisco ere I make my annual hegira to the woods. A few weeks ago I lectured at San Jose and Oakland.*

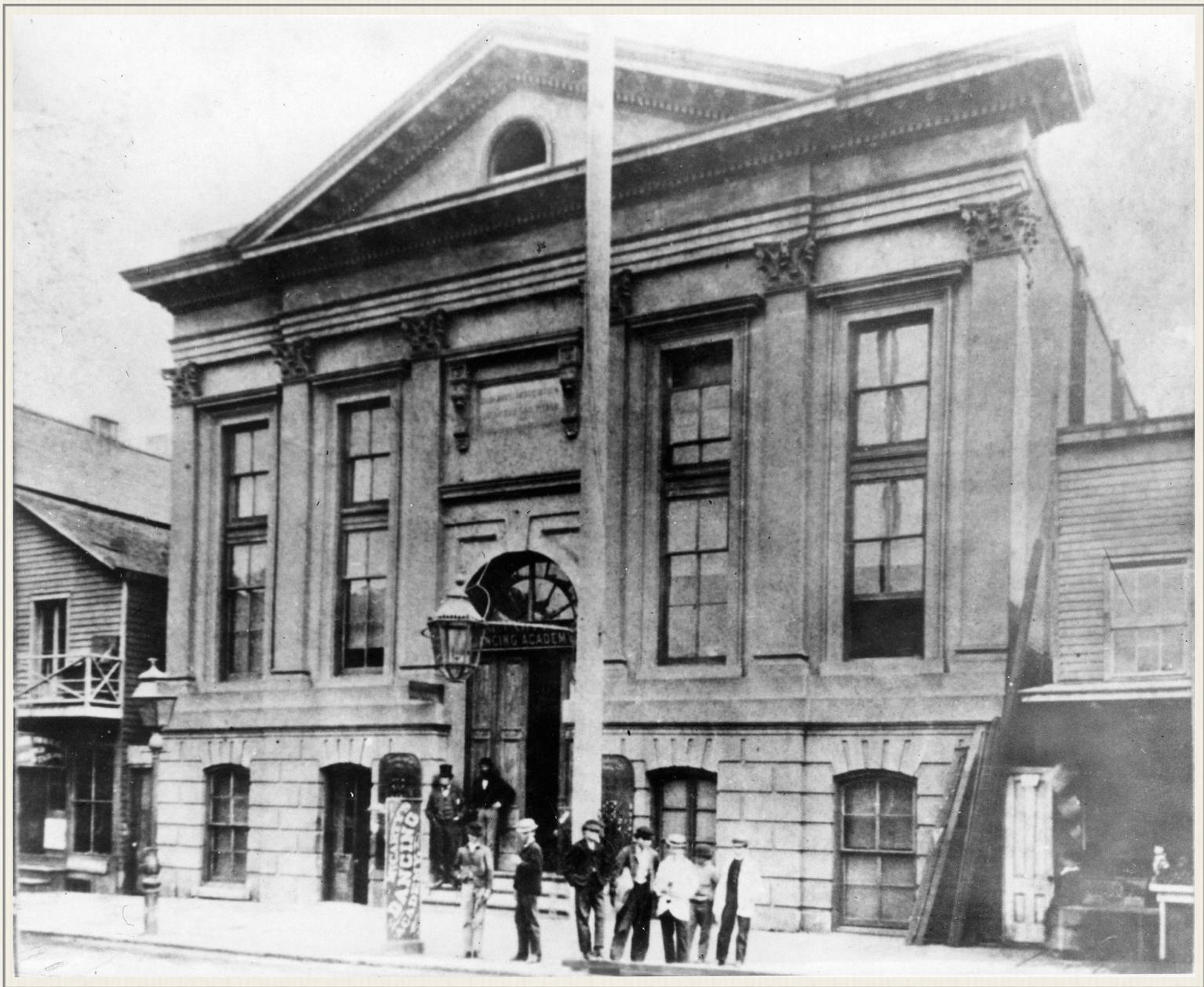
Letter from John Muir to Sarah Muir Galloway, 1876 Apr 17.<sup>5</sup>



First Congregational Church of Oakland (Circa 1870).

Positioned on the northeast corner of Washington and Tenth streets. Photograph courtesy of the First Congregational Church of Oakland.

On Monday, May 15, 1876, John Muir presented to the public at the Dashaway Temperance Hall in San Francisco, California. A brief description of this lecture was published in the *Daily Alta California* and reads as follows: *The Glaciers of California - John Muir delivered a lecture on the Glaciers of California last evening at Dashaway Hall, beginning with a description of a glacier as a river of ice which is fed every Winter by snow, and slowly moves down the mountain side till it melts. There was a time when the western slope of the Sierra Nevada was covered by a vast sheet of ice, one immense glacier, and as the quantity of snow decreased, or the climate became warmer, the ridges of rock came through, dividing the original one large glacier into a multitude of small ones, each confined to a canon. There are now fifty - five glaciers in California, most of them small. One in Shasta has its lower end at an elevation of 9500 feet above the sea, but most of them do not come lower than 11,000 feet, and the average speed of their movements probably does not exceed a mile in three hundred years, though in Switzerland some move at the rate of a mile in fifteen years. That country has 1100 glaciers with an average area of a square mile each. Here the average area, as well as the number, is considerably less. The glaciers carrying large boulders, which, under the pressure of immense weight grind deep into the rocks over which they pass, have done much to give shape to the mountains, and canons, the domes, cliffs and chasms of the Sierras The lecture was received with much favor by the audience.*<sup>6</sup>



Dashaway Hall on Post Street in San Francisco, California. (circa 1867). Photograph courtesy of the San Jose State University Library Special Collections and Archives.

The Dashaway Hall, was constructed by Dashaway Temperance Society of San Francisco in the 1860s, and served for many years as lyceum, musical hall, theater, ballroom and the local meeting space for the city's temperance and women's suffrage movement.<sup>7</sup>

During the summer of 1877, John Muir presented a lecture on the "*Method of Study*" to the faculty of the California State Normal School. In a letter Muir wrote to Jeanne C. Carr, on Sep 3, 1877, he briefly mentions this visit: *I made an excursion to the summit of Mt Hamilton in extraordinary style accompanied by Allen, Norton, Braly &, all the lady*

*professors & their friends... Spent a week at San Jose, enjoyed my visit with Allen very much. Lectured to the faculty on Methods of study without undergoing any very great scare.*<sup>8</sup>

On Tuesday, January 14, 1879, John Muir returned to the First Congregational Church of Sacramento, presenting a lecture for the Sacramento Literary Institute titled "*The Great Basin - Its Glaciers, Lakes, Valleys and Mountain Ranges.*"<sup>9</sup> An extended description of this lecture was printed in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, a portion of which reads as follows: *John Muir, the distinguished geologist and naturalist who has been termed the Thoreau of the Sierra, lectured before the Sacramento Literary Institute at the Congregational Church last evening, on "The Great Basin."* He was received by a large and very superior audience. He spoke for nearly two hours and kept the close attention of his audience throughout. Mr. Muir is not a lecturer; he is a simple unskilled talker, a man who lites in the free air of the mountains, and whose highest ambition is to delve into the wondrous mysteries of nature. He talks to his audience simply, as if speaking to a small circle of friends. Graced by the arts of oratory his lectures would be wonderful productions. He said his subject was too great for one evening's talk; he could, therefore, only sketch its outlines, skim over the surface of what should form a whole course of lectures. Mr. Muir said that he made his maiden speech in Sacramento two years ago, and was so kindly received that in returning he felt like coming among old friends. He had brothers and sisters in number, in society and in business, and so he thought it didn't make much difference if he for one wandered off to commune with the mountains and the forests. About fifteen years ago he went to take a walk in the woods, and he had been in the woods ever since. Perhaps some day he might come out and mingle with men, but just now his loves and friends were all with mountains and the trees, the birds and the fishes, the rocks and streams of this beautiful Pacific coast. The great basin is bounded on the one side by the Wasatch and on the other by the Sierra Nevada mountains, and is some 500 miles in width. On the blackboard he exhibited a cross section of the basin...<sup>10</sup>

In a letter to his close friend Annie Kennedy Bidwell on May 3, 1879, John Muir mentions a bit of hesitation for his upcoming lectures to the Sunday School Assembly in Yosemite Valley that was scheduled for June 7-15, 1879.

920 Valencia St. San Francisco, May 3 1879.

Dear Mrs Bidwell.

*Your bonnie telling bunch of bloom is here, & how gladly I would seek the fields where it came you must know, But alack!! work, work, work, holds me here... The Sunday School people from the east want me to lecture for them; but this is a business that I know little about. Am hard at work with my pen..., I am cordially yrs, John Muir*

Letter from John Muir to [Annie Kennedy] Bidwell, 1879 May 3.<sup>11</sup>

In the second week of June 1879, Muir presented four lectures to the Sunday School Assembly in Yosemite Valley, this congregation being part of the Pacific Coast Excursion, led under the direction of Reverend John Heyl Vincent. Over the course of three days, June 9 - June 11, 1879, Muir treated the Assembly participants to lectures of the following titles: “*The Geological Records of Yosemite*,” “*Mountain Sculpture*,” “*Big Trees*” and “*Sequoia*.”<sup>12</sup> A brief description of his lecture “*The Geological Records of Yosemite*” was printed in the Los Angeles Herald and reads as follows: *John Muir took the platform at 11 o'clock and fortified with a background of diagrams, proceeded to unfold the geological records of the Yosemite Valley glaciers. He said he made the Yosemite glacier one hundred tons to the square foot, enough to crush to any depth, dissenting from the Whitney theory of local subsidence. He humorously inquired where the little granite plug went to that fell out. There are five well defined Yosemites among the Sierra, all plowed out by glaciers, of which he has found sixty-five between thirty-six and thirty-seven degrees. He inspired the crowded house with such enthusiasm that more than a hundred climbed the trail to the Upper Yosemite Falls with the lecturer.*<sup>13</sup>

Just a few days after the Sunday School Assembly in Yosemite Valley had ended, Muir wrote to John and Annie Bidwell, updating them of his activities, while at the same time, expressing his unending anxiety toward his lecturing to an audience.

*920 Valencia St. San Francisco, June 19th 1879.*

*Dear friends, Mrs & Mr Bidwell.*

*Goodbye, I am going home. Going to the mountains, to the ice & forests & flowers. I have just returned from Yosemite Valley where I enjoyed a delicious bath in fresh beauty notwithstanding the uneasy scare I had to suffer in being compelled to lecture... Tomorrow I sail on the Dakota to the ice of the Upper Coast. First to Victoria & about the Sound thence inland here & there to learn what I may: Will probably visit Alaska ere I return in the fall... Goodbye with very cordial regards John Muir.*

Letter from John Muir to [Mr. & Mrs. John] Bidwell, 1879 Jun 19.<sup>14</sup>

In January of 1880, as he was returning to California after six months in Alaska, Muir visited Dr. Lindley, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Portland, who he had known in Fort Wrangell the previous summer. During his visit Reverend Dr. Lindley persuaded John Muir to present a series of public lectures describing his exploration of Alaska.<sup>15</sup> In the letter to his wife, Louie Strentzel, John Muir writes of his discontent of being cornered into the business of lecturing.

*Portland, January 6th, 1880.*

*Dear Louie, I have allowed myself to be entangled in a snarl of lectures while trying to keep free, & make haste to home. I had promised to call on Dr. Lindley, & wanted to gain one small look at the canon of the Columbia for a hundred miles above here, & then away to Martinez. But no sooner had I landed there I was pounced upon & kuffed into the lecture business. The science association, Young Mens Christian Assoc. & some college or other at Forest Grove. All want lectures, I'm fairly in for the two first, but hope to escape the last. Will go to the Dalles tomorrow. First speech on Monday next. Will be back on the Elder which leaves this port about the 15th I think. I wrote you from Sitka. Had a stormy time all the way down from Port Townsend. I have a big lot of snowy sketches & snowy facts for you — sermons in stone & sermons in ice, & ice in everything.*

Letter from [John Muir] to Louie [Strentzel], 1880 Jan 6.<sup>16</sup>

A final result of Muir keeping his promise to visit Dr. Lindley were four lectures presented during the month of January 1880 in the Northwest States of Oregon and Washington.

On Monday, January 12, 1880, John Muir presented a lecture titled “*The Glacier of Alaska and California*” at Turn Halle in Portland Oregon.<sup>17</sup>

On Saturday, January 17, 1880, John Muir presented a lecture titled “*Earth Sculpture: The Formation of Glaciers in the Development of Mines*” at Turn Halle in Portland Oregon.<sup>18</sup>

On Thursday, January 22, 1880, John Muir presented a lecture titled “*The Glacier of Alaska*” at Oak Grove Theater, Vancouver, Washington.<sup>19</sup> An extended description of this lecture was penned by General Oliver O. Howard for the Oregonian, a small excerpt of which reads as follows: *The lecture on glaciers and glacial action was of exceeding interest holding the attention of the audience without interruption of upwards of two hours...He showed incidentally that Switzerland, where Agassiz and Forbes and others studied, the grand forces of a glacial to be far inferior to our own dreaded Alaska, Switzerland has 1100 glaciers – Alaska nearly ten thousand.*<sup>20</sup>

On Friday, January 23, 1880, John Muir presented a lecture titled “*Alaska, It's Mines and Resources*” at Handel and Haydn Hall in Portland Oregon.<sup>21</sup>

A month following his lectures in Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington, on Tuesday, February 24, 1880, John Muir returned a third time to the Congregational Church in Sacramento, California to present a lecture for the Literary Institute titled “*Alaska; its Glaciers, Forests, Gold Fields, etc.*” A lengthy description of the talk was printed in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, a portion of which reads as follows: *There was a fair attendance, and the attention paid evinced a desire on the part of his hearers to know something of that country. The speaker adopted the conversational tone, and his narration was straightforward and unstudied,*

*the pictures of what he had seen seeming to have been vividly impressed upon his mind. The speaker adopted the conversational tone, and his narration was straightforward and unstudied, the pictures of what he had seen seeming to have been vividly impressed upon his mind.*<sup>22</sup>

On Thursday, December 30, 1880, John Muir presented to the California Teachers Association in San Francisco's Dashaway Hall, a lecture titled "*Alaska and its Glaciers.*" The following mention of the gathering was printed in the Report of the Commissioner of Education, Educational Convention, California State Association (1880): *In June 1875, a State Teachers Association was formed at San Jose. This body continues to hold annual sessions, the one for 1880, which met December 28-30 at San Francisco, being unusually successful. The attendance, while not particularly large included many representative teachers. The president, Professor Norton, addressed the audience on "Joints in our armor;" Rev. C.C. Stratton, of the University of the Pacific, lectured on "Christian higher education" pleading for moral, as well as intellectual culture...and a lecture was given by Mr. John Muir on Alaska and its glaciers.*<sup>23</sup>

Among the members of the California Teachers Association, listed as having been present at the session of 1880, were the following familiar names: CH Allen, CW Childs, Josiah Keep, George W. Minns, HB Norton, Mary EB Norton, Reverend CC Stratton, John Swett, Miss MJ Titus, Lucy M. Washburn and Miss Helen Wright.<sup>24</sup>

On Tuesday, January 18, 1881, John Muir returned a fourth time to Reverend Dr. IE Dwinell's Sacramento Literary Institute to present a lecture titled "*The Resources of Alaska.*" A description of the presentation was penned for the *Sacramento Daily Union* and reads as follows: *There was a good audience, and the lecture, which was replete with interest throughout, was listened to with most marked attention. The mountains, streams and general features of the Territory were described with a familiarity and clearness which indicated a close study and intimate*

*knowledge of the subject, and which, with the aid of maps and diagrams, was brought to the view of his hearers in a very pleasing and instructive manner.*<sup>25</sup>

These public lectures provided John Muir with an opportunity to present to an audience who accepted the idea, similar to his and numerous other naturalists of the nineteenth century, that the natural world was to be interpreted as the handiwork of God's divine glory placed upon the earth. As previously suggested, this idea was not a new idea, as the Puritan preacher, philosopher, and theologian Jonathan Edwards, had understood the natural world as an expression of the God's masterful creation, and who during his life, ventured into the wilderness to worship in the solitude of nature.

Whether it be a presentation at the First Congregational Church of Sacramento, the First Congregational Church of Oakland, the Hall of the Dashaway Temperance Society in San Francisco, the California State Normal School at San Jose, or the Sunday School Convention in Yosemite Valley, each of these audiences were primarily the congregates of one Anglo-Protestant denomination or another, who celebrated a mythos set in motion long ago by the Puritans of the New England colonies.

As such, the audience that listened to John Muir's earliest lectures was one whose idea of the natural world mirrored closely that of the participants attending the annual Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC in Pacific Grove, California; an idea that nature, particularly here in America, was to be recognized as a magnificent reflection of God's creation, and science as the reasoned interpretation of God's grand design. This idea that the natural world was sculptured as part of God's creative expression was one that both Louis Agassiz and John Muir embraced throughout their lives.<sup>26</sup>

Like his friends Joseph Le Conte and Asa Gray, for John Muir the acceptance of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was not a denial of the existence of God. Muir's view toward evolution, captured in his own words, incorporates the idea that a Creator's handiwork was somehow associated with the process: *Somewhere, before evolution was,*

*was an Intelligence that laid out the plan, and evolution is the process, not the origin, of the harmony.  
You may call that Intelligence what you please: I cannot see why so many people object to call it God.<sup>27</sup>*



Campground with tent, buckboard and wagon. Two men, one of them being John Muir, and two women in front of tent at the Pacific Grove Methodist Retreat, June 18, 1900. The above image is one of several that capture a journey made by John Muir and friends to Yosemite and Pacific Grove in 1900. Photograph courtesy of California State Library, Sacramento, California.

## CONNECTIONS TO JOHN MUIR

The influence of Louis Agassiz arrived to California much earlier than with the observational, inquiry based, “hands-on” method of teaching natural sciences used by the instructors of the Pacific Coast Assembly of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. One such arrival was through John Muir, who had become an avid proponent of Agassiz position on glaciation. Muir’s transcripts from the University of Wisconsin show he studied geology with Professor Ezra Slocum Carr, who was familiar with the methods of study of Louis Agassiz. For Ezra Carr’s course in geology, classes were conducted outdoors, allowing students to observe the terrain and develop the observational and deductive reasoning skills necessary to properly interpret the geological processes associated with the lands formation.<sup>28</sup> Applying the glacial theory hypothesized by Louis Agassiz, and the deductive reasoning skills he learned from Ezra Carr, John Muir proposed that glaciers were instrumental in carving out Yosemite Valley.<sup>29</sup>

In a letter to Mrs. Ezra S. [Jeannie] Carr, John Muir made reference to the method of study he used to understand the process of glaciation as it occurred in the high Sierra's.

*I can do much of this ice work in the quiet, and the whole I subject is purely physical, so that I can get but little from books. All depends upon the goodness of one's eyes. No scientific book in the world can tell me how this Yosemite granite is put together, or how it has been taken down. Patient observation and constant brooding above the rocks, lying upon them for years as the ice did, is the way to arrive at the truths which are graven so lavishly upon them.*

Letter from John Muir to Mrs. [Jeanne C.] Carr, 1871 Sep or Oct.<sup>30</sup>

Professor Joseph Le Conte, the distinguished geologist positioned at the University of California, Berkeley, who had studied under Agassiz at Harvard, was one of the first

men with the scientific understanding to acknowledge the accuracy of Muir's theoretical observations.

Joseph Le Conte first befriended the famed naturalist as he and a team of eight students traveled to Yosemite in July of 1870 to study glaciers, inadvertently meeting Muir during the first days of the trip in Yosemite Valley. With a small amount of persuasion, Muir was persuaded to join the group for the remaining ten days of the expedition.<sup>31</sup> According to Joseph Le Conte's journal, during the expedition, the two men had extensive discussions regarding the geology and the process of glaciation in relation to Yosemite.<sup>32</sup>

In August of 1872, Louis and Mrs. Agassiz visited San Francisco with the Hassler oceanographic expedition. During his stay, Agassiz received a letter from John Muir, to which Mrs. Agassiz kindly wrote a reply. Muir himself, in his letter to Robert Underwood Johnson, described the context of this exchange of communication between the two men:

*Yosemite was my home when Agassiz was in San Francisco, I never saw him. When he was there I wrote him a long icy letter telling what glorious things I had to show him urging him to come to the mountains. The reply to this letter was written by Mrs. Agassiz in which she told me that when Agassiz read my letter he said excitedly "Here is the first man I have ever found who has any adequate conception of glacial action."*

[Letter from John Muir to [Robert Underwood] Johnson, 1895 May 3.]<sup>33</sup>

Joseph Le Conte, during his former professor's visit to San Francisco in August of 1872, conversed with Louis Agassiz. At one point Le Conte mentioned John Muir as knowing "more about the glaciation of the Sierra than anyone else" to which Agassiz responded emphatically, with his hand slapping the table, "He knows all about it."<sup>34</sup>

The connections of John Muir to the Pacific Coast Assembly, and the nature study movement that was afoot in California, is further recognized through Muir's friendships with a number of contributors to the Assembly. Among the names of instructors and naturalist who contributed to the Pacific Coast Assembly of the CLSC, and who were friends with John Muir, were a number of the faculty of the California State Normal School including CH Allen, HB Norton, Mary EB Norton, CW Childs, Volney Rattan, Lucy M. Washburn and Helen S. Wright. Beyond these instructors of the California State Normal School, John Muir was friends with Charles Christopher Parry, John G. Lemmon, his wife, Sara Allen Lemmon, William C. Bartlett, William Emerson Ritter, Cornelius B. Bradley, Joseph Le Conte and David Starr Jordan. As well, Cornelius B. Bradley, Joseph Le Conte and David Starr Jordan worked with John Muir and others, namely University of California Professor Henry Senger, Mills College trustee and attorney Warren Olney, and the California landscape painter, William Keith, to establish the Sierra Club in May 1892.<sup>35</sup>

From the start, one finds a number of faculty members from Mills College, the University of California and Stanford University, either serving as board members or charter members of the Sierra Club. Listed among the sixty-four charter members of the Sierra Club, at the date of the adoption of the By Laws in 1892 were Mrs. CT Mills and Josiah Keep of Mills College; Professors CB Bradley, E. L. Green, Joseph Le Conte, John Gill Lemmon, RH Loughridge, JH Senger and E. C. Van Dyke of the University of California; Professors MB Anderson, John C. Branner, James O. Griffin, David Starr Jordan, Charles D. Marx, Fernando Sanford of Stanford University and Stanford Trustee Timothy Hopkins for whom Hopkins Seaside Laboratory was named.<sup>36</sup> As well, among those listed as witnesses to the signing of the Sierra Clubs' articles of incorporation, on June 4, 1892, is Professor Josiah Keep, longtime instructor of conchology at the Pacific Coast Assembly.<sup>37</sup> For many years after the founding of the Sierra Club much of the strength and initiative of the organization came from the faculty and student bodies of both the UC Berkeley and Stanford.<sup>38</sup>

Pressing further to recognize these connections with John Muir to those instructors who contributed to the Pacific Coast Assembly leads one to find the article “*The Grand Circuit of the Yosemite National Park*” written by Sierra Club member Lucy M. Washburn and published in the Sierra Club Bulletin, Volume 7, 1909.<sup>39</sup>

## THE MUIR CLAN IN PACIFIC GROVE

In February 1891, Margaret Muir Reid, John Muir's elder sister, and her husband John Reid, relocated to the Muir-Strentzel properties of the Alhambra Valley in Martinez, California. John Reid quickly assumed many of the duties associated with managing Martinez ranch properties, thereby relieving John Muir of a bit of this arduous burden. During the summer of 1893, several letters from his daughters Helen and Wanda, and wife Louisa Strentzel, sent to Muir during his visit Europe to study the glaciers of Norway and Switzerland, make reference to Pacific Grove. The letters from his daughters mention the family considering a vacation to the seaside community with aunt Margaret Muir Reid in the coming weeks. A letter from Muir's wife, a few days later, explains that the family's plan to visit Pacific Grove were cancelled after a conversation with friends, who had just returned from seaside retreat, found the conditions excessively cool and foggy. Beyond these letters of correspondence, referencing the seaside community, it is of interest to note that John Muir's younger brother David Muir, and older sister Sarah Muir Galloway, became the residents of, and spent their final years, in Pacific Grove.



Mayflower Congregational Church at the corner of Central Avenue and  
14th Street in Pacific Grove, California.

Photograph courtesy of Pacific Grove Natural  
History Museum.

## DAVID MUIR

In 1892, David Muir and his wife Juliaette, moved from Portage, Wisconsin to Martinez, California to assist in the management of the Muir-Strentzel properties.<sup>40</sup> With John Reid and David Muir's handling the day-to-day operations of the Martinez Valley properties, John Muir was released from his time consumed by managing of the ranch. The lessening burden of the ranch responsibilities enabled John Muir to start the Sierra Club, lead hiking trips in the Sierra's, and, through his writings, advocate for the preservation of wilderness.<sup>41</sup> During their time in the Alhambra Valley, David Muir and his wife attended services at the Congregational Church in Martinez, California. In fact, when the First Congregational Church of Martinez filed the Articles of Incorporation with the state of California on March 2, 1904, David Muir was among the names listed.<sup>42</sup>

In 1905, David Muir, at age sixty-five, having grown tired of the labor intensive ranch work, sold his ranch in Martinez, and he and his wife moved to Pacific Grove, buying two lots next to the home of his sister, Sarah Muir Galloway. John Muir, in a letter to his daughters Helen and Wanda, provides a brief mention of his brother's purchasing of the property: *David has bought 2 lots in Pacific Grove though he complained he was broke when settling with me begged a few hundreds for sweet charity's sake. A queer poor Deacon, also cunning.*

Letter from John Muir to [Helen & Wanda Muir], 1906 Jan 3.<sup>43</sup>

In a letter from Sarah Muir Galloway to her sister Emma Muir, she mentions the following: *David has built his new house just a few steps from ours. They are much better in health since coming to the grove, and enjoy living here.*

Letter from Sarah Muir Galloway to Emma Muir, 1906 Dec 21.<sup>44</sup>

In Pacific Grove, David Muir served as a deacon of the Mayflower Congregational Church, where he attended meetings, participated in the choir, and was a man whose Christian morality influenced numerous men of his church and the community.<sup>45</sup> After a short illness, at the age of seventy-six, David Muir passed away in his home in Pacific Grove in 1916.

A brief mention of David Muir in the Church News Notes section of the weekly publication, *The Pacific: Representative Of The Congregational Churches Of The Pacific Coast of 1916* reads as follows: *The brother was more famous; but the churches in Pacific Grove and Martinez, as well as some in Wisconsin, know that for the fine integrity and Christian grace and royal keeping of the faith, David Muir was surpassed by few.*<sup>46</sup>

## SARAH MUIR GALLOWAY

Shortly after the death of their mother, Ann Gilrye Muir, in 1896, Sarah Muir Galloway moved to Martinez, California to be close to her younger brothers John and David Muir, and other family members who had already relocated to California. Her move to Pacific Grove was precipitated by Sarah's oldest daughter Anna, who had been living in Oregon with her husband Hiram Eastman, where upon Hiram's death in 1904, Anna relocated to the small coastal community on the southern end of Monterey Bay.<sup>47</sup> Several months later, Sarah joined her daughter to help care for Anna's two children, Marjorie and Kenneth Eastman. Sarah Muir Galloway, who lived to the age of ninety-six, passing away in 1936 in her home in Pacific Grove, held the closest and longest memories of her famous brother.<sup>48</sup> Her advice and help were solicited by a number of Muir biographers including William Frederick Badè who penned the following tribute to Sarah in the copy of his book given to her: *To Sarah Muir Galloway whose sisterly sympathy was a noble part of the greatness of John Muir and who will live in his fame beside him for generations to come.*<sup>49</sup>

Sarah Muir Galloway, and her daughter Anna Eastman, lived on 9th Street in Pacific Grove, with her brother David Muir's residence located just a few doors up the street. As such, both homes were located less than a block from the ocean and easy walking distance to the Pacific Grove Museum, Chautauqua Hall, the Mayflower Congregational Church and the center of town.