1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Strentzel-Muir Ranch

Other Name/Site Number: John Muir House (and Martinez Adobe); John Muir National Historic Site

Street and Number: 4204 Alhambra Avenue

City/Town: Martinez **County:** Contra Costa **State:** CA

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior, December 29, 1962.

Updated documentation approved by the Secretary of the Interior, December 11, 2023.

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Criteria Exceptions: N/A

NHL Theme(s): II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
1. clubs and organizations
III. Expressing Cultural Values
3. literature
VI. Expanding Science and Technology
3. scientific thought and theory
VII. Transforming the Environment
3. protecting and preserving the environment

Period(s) of Significance: 1880-1914

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2)**:** John Muir

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6)**:** N/A

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: Strentzel-Muir House: Wolfe &Son/ Sylvester & Langabee; Martinez Adobe: Vicente Martinez

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

Estimated Burden Statement. Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

Historic Context: Theme XIX: Conservation of Natural Resources; Theme XX: The Arts and Sciences: Literature (1963 Thematic Framework)

3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

___ Yes

_X_ No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: 336.42 acres (House Site: 8.9; Mount Wanda Site: 326.25; Gravesite: 1.27)

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)**:**
Datum if other than WGS84:

House Site:
A: 37.992451, -122.130937
B: 37.992093, -122.132260
C: 37.991433, -122.132552
D: 37.991389, -122.133946
E: 37.990721, -122.133919
F: 37.990586, -122.133288
G: 37.990971, -122.130756
H: 37.991347, -122.130472

Mount Wanda:
I: 37.989494, -122.130302
J: 37.982439, -122.125645
K: 37.981012, -122.129670
L: 37.979937, -122.125021
M: 37.978731, -122.126102
N: 37.975200, -122.127305
O: 37.987311, -122.139613

Strentzel-Muir Gravesite:
P: 37.979022, -122.124053
Q: 37.978714, -122.122903
R: 37.978149, -122.123618
S: 37.978835, -122.123791
T: 37.978919, -122.124099

3. Verbal Boundary Description:

The Strentzel-Muir Ranch National Historic Landmark (NHL) District is comprised of three discontiguous contributing sites sharing nearly the same boundaries as the three units of John Muir National Historic Site. Two areas of the park are excluded from the NHL: a forty-four-acre parcel known as West Hill Farm which is expected (as of 2022) to be added to the Mount Wanda unit but which was never part of the Strentzel-Muir property; and six small contiguous parcels (two privately owned, three city owned, and one NPS owned) at the northeast corner of the Mount Wanda unit. While these parcels were part of the historic Strentzel-Muir property, their dominant features post-date the period of significance and they do not retain the high level of integrity required for inclusion in the NHL.

The House Site shares the same boundary as Contra Costa County parcel number 370-050-041-0. It begins at point A on the west side of Alhambra Avenue and runs west southwest before crossing Franklin Creek and turning south southwest at point B on the west bank of the creek. The boundary then turns west at point C, paralleling the Main Farm Road at the property line of the residential neighborhood to the north before turning south at Canyon Way at point D. The boundary runs south along the east side of Canyon Way to point E, then turns southeast before heading east at point F to follow the north side of the California State Route 4 corridor. At point G, the boundary turns northeast to meet Alhambra Avenue before turning north northwest at point H to meet the starting point.

The Mount Wanda boundary includes Contra Costa County parcel numbers 367-060-016-6 and 367-060-002-6. The boundary begins at point I northwest of the intersection of Franklin Canyon Road and Alhambra Avenue. It then runs south southeast to border Alhambra Avenue and then Alhambra Valley Road. Two wedge shaped areas of residential development are excluded from the site on its eastern boundary. The first line begins at point J on the west side of Alhambra Avenue, roughly opposite from Gilbert Court, extending west southwest to point K just east of the summit ridge fire road before turning east southeast to connect to point L on the west side of Alhambra Valley Road, roughly opposite from Sheridan Lane. The other area excludes a smaller wedge of residential development west of Alhambra Valley Road roughly opposite from Strentzel Lane. From point M, the boundary continues south along Alhambra Valley Road before turning northwest at point N roughly opposite from Deodara Lane. The boundary then runs west northwest then north along the lower slopes of Mount Wanda. The boundary turns east northeast at point O at the BNSF rail corridor to connect to the starting point.

The Strentzel-Muir Gravesite shares the same boundary as Contra Costa County parcel number 366-090-021-2. It begins at point P on the east side of Strentzel Lane and runs east along a perimeter fence to Alhambra Creek. From point Q, the boundary runs generally south along the creek, passing the burial plot to the boundary with private property. At point R, the line turns northwest, turning slightly to the north northeast before turning west at point S then east at point T to the starting point at Strentzel Lane.

4. Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses the area originally designated as an NHL in 1962 as well as additional lands containing resources that were part of the Strentzel-Muir Ranch during the period of significance, are associated with Muir's life and significant contributions to conservation, and retain a high degree of integrity.

5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located in the Alhambra Valley on the outskirts of Martinez, California, the Strentzel-Muir Ranch is where Scottish-born naturalist John Muir (1838-1914) lived and worked during the years of his greatest influence on the American conservation movement. The period of significance encompasses the full period of Muir's residence on the property, beginning in 1880 with his marriage to Louisa (Louie) Strentzel, daughter and heir of the wealthy Strentzel family, and ending with his death in 1914. The ranch is significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with important events in the history of conservation including the establishment of Yosemite National Park in 1890, the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892, the creation and expansion of early national forest reserves, and the battle over the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite. Muir's marriage to Louie Strentzel and role in the management of the Strentzels' extensive Martinez fruit ranch provided him with the financial security, social connections, and family support necessary to commit himself to the movement. From his "scribble den" on the second floor of the Italianate Strentzel-Muir House, Muir mounted letter writing campaigns and produced many of his most influential works including *The Mountains of California* (1894), *Our National Parks* (1901), *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911), *The Yosemite* (1912), and *The Story of my Boyhood and Youth* (1913). The Strentzel-Muir Ranch is additionally significant under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with the life of John Muir as a nationally significant person in American conservation. The property offers unique opportunities to explore the various influences on Muir's life and to understand him as a multifaceted individual with responsibilities as a husband, father, agriculturalist, author, and advocate for the natural world.

NHL Documentation Background and Summary of Updates

The property was designated as an NHL in 1962 with the name "John Muir House (and Martinez Adobe)."[1] A feasibility report completed in 1963 defined the original property encompassing the Strentzel-Muir House (built 1882), the Martinez Adobe (built 1849), and the intervening lands.[2] The area was established as John Muir National Historic Site in 1964. An updated National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) form evaluating the property at the national and state levels of significance was prepared in 1975 and accepted in 1978.[3]

This update expands the NHL district boundary to include Mount Wanda and the Strentzel-Muir Gravesite as discontiguous contributing sites. Added to John Muir National Historic Site in 1993 and 2000 respectively, Mount Wanda and the Strentzel-Muir Gravesite are located south of the original House Unit (identified as the House Site for the purpose of this nomination) on the south side of California State Route 4. Comprising 326.25 acres, Mount Wanda—named after the Muirs' eldest daughter—consists of oak woodland and grass-covered hillsides overlooking the Alhambra Valley. A remnant olive orchard dating to Muir's time is present on its southeast slope. The 1.27-acre Strentzel-Muir Gravesite is located in a residential neighborhood east of Alhambra Avenue about one mile south of the House Site and approximately 500' from the southeast boundary of Mount Wanda. The site consists of the Strentzel-Muir family burial plot; a remnant historic pear orchard; and

[1] National Park Service, "John Muir House (and Martinez Adobe)," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, November 26, 1962.

[2] John Hussey, Ronald N. Mortimore, Charles S. Pope, Lewis Koue, and John Wosky. "Feasibility Report: John Muir Home and Vicente Martinez Adobe, Martinez, California," US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Western Region, March 1963.

[3] National Park Service, "John Muir National Historic Site," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form. October 10, 1975.

specimen trees including incense cedar trees (*Calocedrus decurrens*), California laurel (*Umbellularia californica*), and eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus sp*.). The amendment provides description and analysis of these sites and updates resource descriptions at the House Site. Revisions to the property description are informed by a 2018 site visit, consultation with park staff, and natural and cultural resource documentation completed since the 1975 NRHP update.[4] The property name is also revised to Strentzel-Muir Ranch to better represent the expanded boundary encompassing not only the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe but other surrounding lands that historically comprised Muir's ranch home. The name also recognizes the importance of Muir's marriage into the Strentzel family, his relationship with his wife Louie Strentzel as well as their daughters Wanda and Helen, and his role in managing the family's expansive fruit ranch to his emergence as one of the nation's foremost conservationists.

The discussion of national significance is also updated in accordance with current scholarship, site documentation, and NHL guidelines. The amendment expands the analysis of links between Muir's family and work life in Martinez and his conservation advocacy; brings attention to Louie Muir's role in maintaining the household and supporting her husband's involvement in conservation; and provides an up-to-date assessment of John Muir's influence in the areas of science and environmental philosophy in the United States. Additional updates include a historic context statement summarizing John Muir's role in the American conservation movement and an evaluation of comparable properties. Critical interpretations of Muir's life and legacy are also incorporated as part of the significance evaluation and context. This includes discussion of race, class, and gender inequities of the time that were reflected in Muir's environmental vision and in the movements he inspired.

Finally, the period of significance is updated to 1880 to 1914 to encompass the full period of Muir's association with the ranch. Muir moved to the Strentzel property after his marriage to Louie Strentzel in 1880, taking on the position as ranch manager in 1881. Initially, the Muirs lived in the original Strentzel ranch house located about one mile south of the present House Site. (The original ranch house burned down in the 1990s and is no longer extant.) Following the death of Louie's father Dr. John Strentzel in 1890, the Muirs assumed responsibility for administering the estate. John, Louie, and their daughters Wanda and Helen also moved into the larger Strentzel mansion (built 1882) with Louie's mother Louisiana Strentzel in 1890. Soon after, Muir was able to end his role as ranch manager and devote himself to conservation advocacy. Following Louie Muir's death in 1905, John continued to live on the property until his death from pneumonia in 1914. This period corresponds with several important events in the history of conservation and is the period in which Muir emerged as one of the movement's most influential leaders.

Biographical Overview: John Muir's Early Life and Influences

Born in Dunbar, Scotland in 1838, John Muir immigrated with his family to Wisconsin at age eleven. John's father was a harsh taskmaster, imposing strict religious discipline and requiring his son to labor long hours on the family farm. John showed uncommon intelligence and inventiveness from a young age. He made his own

[4] Architectural Resources Group (ARG), *John Muir House Historic Structure Report*, Phase 1 of 3 (Sacramento: Architectural Resources Group, 2004); Jeffrey Killion and Mark Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report for John Muir National Historic Site* (Boston: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 2005); Mary Grassick, *Historic Furnishings Report: Strentzel-Muir House, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California* (Harpers Ferry Center: Office of Media Development, National Park Service, 2006); Susan O'Neil and Stefanie Egan, *Plant Community Classification and Mapping Project: John Muir National Historic Site (Mt. Wanda)*, National Park Service, San Francisco Bay Area Network Inventory and Monitoring Program, September 2004; and Sean Baumgarten, Erin Beller, Robin Grossinger, and Ruth Askevold, *Mt. Wanda Historical Ecology Investigation: A Reconnaissance Study Investigating Historical Landscape Data for the John Muir National Historic Site*, Publication #743 (Richmond, CA: San Francisco Estuary Institute-Aquatic Science Center, 2015).

tools and invented several novel devices including an "early rising machine," a combined alarm clock and bed that tilted up at a set time to place its occupant on their feet. Walks in the Wisconsin woods sparked an interest in botany, which he pursued during a two-and-a-half-year course of study at the University of Wisconsin. Muir maintained his passion for botany as he moved between factory jobs through the mid-1860s. This included a period in Canada where Muir, a pacifist from his youth, avoided conscription during the Civil War. In September 1867, after recovering from an industrial accident which nearly blinded him, the twenty-nine-year-old Muir embarked on a thousand-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico during which he collected botanical samples, made sketches, and recorded observations of the landscape and the people he met along the way.[5]

Muir's travels through the South helped him formulate a distinct set of attitudes toward nature, God, and humanity which continued to develop during his later years in California. Hardships encountered along the route included impenetrable swamps, the threat of dangerous animals, highway robbers, and prolonged sickness. He was forced to spend five nights outdoors in a cemetery outside of Savanah, Georgia with almost nothing to eat while awaiting a delayed shipment of funds. These experiences inspired humility in the face of nature, leading Muir to the unorthodox conclusion that the non-human world possessed intrinsic worth independent of human needs and desires. Rejecting the rigid theology of his Scottish forebears, he came to see divinity in all of nature from the largest tree to the most delicate flower—even in alligators, snakes, thorny plants, and noxious insects, each of which had its designated place in creation.[6] His journal reveals the genesis of a biocentric perspective that humanity had no special favor under God. "The universe would be incomplete without man," Muir wrote, "but it would also be incomplete without the smallest transmicroscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge."[7]

Setting out to follow the "wildest, leafiest and least trodden way," Muir had little interest in social commentary.[8] However, he could not avoid passing through populated areas of the South still in turmoil following the Civil War. Throughout the walk, Muir relied on the generosity of strangers—white and Black, rich and poor—for food, lodging, company, and advice. Muir's earnestness and congeniality seemed to earn him trust, and many people welcomed him into their homes despite their initial suspicions. Although egalitarian in his interactions and generally complimentary of those who offered assistance, Muir also formed critical impressions of many people he met. He described poor Southern whites as "primitive" and uncouth in their work, appearance, and manners; and while he admired the well-ordered houses of the upper class of Athens, Georgia, he found their reception of him comparatively cold and their prejudicial politics distasteful.[9] Muir likely had little or no meaningful contact with African Americans prior to setting out, and his impressions of those he encountered on the journey contain condescending and stereotypical language common for the time. He described a group of fieldworkers as lazy "Sambos and Sallies," for example, and commented on how "well trained" the Black residents of Athens seemed in their manners toward him as a white man.[10]

Muir also expressed criticism of Southerners' relationships with the wildness around them. He disapproved of those who hunted for sport or out of the belief that all of nature was made for their taking.[11] He disparaged a

[5] Muir's early life is summarized in Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), ch. 2.

[6] James B. Hunt, *Restless Fires: Young John Muir's Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf in 1867-68* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2012), 178, 180; Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 136-137.

[7] John Muir, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, edited by William Frederic Badé (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 139.

[8] Ibid., 1.

[9] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 125-128.

[10] Muir, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, 51, 52.

[11] Ibid., 121-122.

transient Black couple in Florida who had welcomed him to their campfire for allowing their child to "lie nestless and naked in the dirt."[12] He made similar comments about a malaria-stricken family of poor white squatters covered with what he described as "the most diseased and incurable dirt that I ever saw, evidently desperately chronic and hereditary."[13] Holding such people below the standard set by nature, he concluded that "Man and other civilized animals are the only creatures that ever become dirty."[14] This aversion to dirt appeared frequently in Muir's later writings, notably in his descriptions of Native Americans in the mountains of California.[15] For Muir, lack of attention to cleanliness put one out of place in nature and made them unlike the wild creatures he held in high esteem. While perhaps reflective of his strict Calvinist upbringing, such responses also displayed an insensitivity to patterns of race, class, and gender inequity that lay behind the varied environmental experiences and attitudes he encountered across the American landscape.

Following a long period of recovery from illness (likely malaria) in Florida and Cuba, Muir made his way to New York before sailing for San Francisco, arriving in March 1868. Eager to leave the city, he set out on foot to Yosemite. Muir was inspired by his brief visit to the Sierra Nevada and determined to make additional explorations. He spent his "first summer in the Sierra" in 1869 with a sheepherding outfit and by 1870 was operating a sawmill near the base of Yosemite Falls.[16]

Muir's initial impressions of the Sierra kindled an interest in glaciers, leading to his 1871 publication of "Yosemite Glaciers" in *The New York Tribune*. The article presented evidence that great rivers of ice had once filled the Yosemite basin, and that its distinctive U-shaped valleys and smoothed granite features were the result of the scouring action of those ancient glaciers. Based on extensive field observation, Muir's theory challenged California state geologist Josiah Whitney's explanation that a cataclysmic earthquake had formed the Yosemite Valley. Whitney denigrated Muir as an "ignoramus" and "mere sheepherder" even as he suppressed evidence of Sierra glaciers in his own survey reports.[17] Later geologists validated most of Muir's key findings, cementing his legacy in the history of American science. Writing in 1938, noted Sierra geologist François Matthes concluded that Muir "was more intimately familiar with the facts on the ground and was more nearly right in their interpretation, than any professional geologist of his time."[18] Muir followed up his initial article with a string of additional publications in journals across the country. His accessible blend of personal narrative interspersed with scientific and descriptive language helped launch his career as a nature writer.

Muir's growing reputation brought him to the attention of prominent scientists, writers, artists, and reformers. In 1871, he met Ralph Waldo Emerson in Yosemite, but was disappointed when the elder transcendentalist elected to retire to the hotel rather than camp among the Sequoias. The following year, Muir met Harvard botanist Asa Gray in Yosemite. Later, he led Gray and Sir Joseph Hooker, Britain's leading botanist and a close friend of Charles Darwin, on a tour of Mount Shasta. In 1874, Muir befriended California State Superintendent of Schools John Swett and his wife, teacher and suffragist Mary Tracy Swett, at whose San Francisco house he often stayed during the winter months. Also among Muir's acquaintances were William Keith, a California painter of Scottish lineage, and prominent California pioneer, rancher, and politician John Bidwell and his wife

[12] Ibid., 107.
[13] Ibid., 109.
[14] Ibid., 110.
[15] John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 304. Also see Simon P. James, "'Nothing Truly Wild is Unclean': Muir, Misanthropy, and the Aesthetics of Dirt," *Environmental Ethics* 36, No. 3 (2014): 357-363.; and John Muir Global Network, "John Muir and Native Americans," https://johnmuir.org/native-americans/.
[16] Muir's early explorations and impressions of the Sierra Nevada are detailed in Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*.
[17] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness: The Life of John Muir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1945), 132, 133.
[18] François Matthes, "John Muir and the Glacial Theory of Yosemite," *Sierra Club Bulletin* 23, no 2 (April 1938): 9.

Ann Bidwell, a noted suffragist and reformer.[19] In 1877, Muir spent five weeks at the Bidwells' ranch in Chico where he explored the vast holdings and learned about the latest techniques in ranching. Although not mentioned in Muir's correspondence or journals, the Bidwells' reliance on a large Native American labor force may have colored his impressions of California agriculture and of the circumstances facing the region's Native inhabitants.[20]

As he gained recognition as an author, some of Muir's friends began trying to lure the peripatetic mountaineer to a more settled existence. The most influential of these was Jeanne Carr whose husband Ezra had been one of Muir's professors at the University of Wisconsin. An amateur botanist and nature lover, Carr enjoyed a close relationship with Muir, serving as his confidant and mentor. Through regular correspondence, she encouraged him to develop and share his distinctive worldview. She also helped publicize his writing and introduced him to several influential people. By the mid-1870s, Carr took it upon herself to find him a marriage partner, ultimately determining that Louie Strentzel, daughter of her close friends John and Louisiana Strentzel of Martinez, California, would make a perfect match. John and Louie met for the first time in 1874 at Carr's urging, although the wedding did not follow until 1880, between John's first and second trips to Alaska.

According to Donald Worster, Carr may have seen something of herself in the young Louie Strentzel.[21] While neither Jeanne nor Louie were inclined to follow John on his mountain adventures, they shared a love of nature, enjoying walks and botanizing in the rolling hills and cultivated landscapes nearer home. Just as Jeanne provided support to her husband, Louie embraced her obligations as an only child, assisting her father in managing ranch finances and accompanying him to Grange meetings where she entertained on the piano with popular union songs such as "Hold the Fort" and "Storm the Fort, Ye Knights of Labor." Formally educated at Miss Atkins Young Ladies Seminary across the Carquinez Strait in Benicia, Louie had broad knowledge of literature, science, business, and current events. Like Jeanne and many other women in John's life, Louie was a strong supporter of women's suffrage. She also regularly attended the local Methodist Episcopal Church with her mother and was recognized as an accomplished classical pianist.[22]

Prior to his relationship with Louie, John had eyed marriage with antipathy, classifying it as a calamity akin to serious illness, and had warned his brother Dan that falling in love meant "adieu to study."[23] Historian Stephen Fox suggests that as Muir grew accustomed to the comforts of the Swett home, and as he saw his younger siblings marry, he became more receptive to the possibility for himself.[24] Even after marrying and settling down on the Strentzel ranch, however, Muir continued to maintain a public persona as "John o' the Mountains," a wilderness sage seemingly more at home in the wilds than in the city or on the farm. The writings for which he is best known drew largely from the experiences of his bachelor years and contain almost no mention of his family or life on the ranch. Muir's wiry frame, ruddy complexion, and unkempt beard further lent him an aura of authenticity as someone who, as historian Donald Worster writes, "had just come down from the summits for a brief spell and would return tomorrow."[25]

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[19] Sierra Club, "Chronology (Timeline) of the Life and Legacy of John Muir," https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/chronology.aspx.

[20] For an overview of John Bidwell's use of Native labor refer to Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 250-254.

[21] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 239.

[22] Ibid., 239-240.; Steve and Patty Pauly, "Louie Strentzel Muir," n.d., https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/people/louie_muir_bio.aspx. Also see Wolf, *Son of the Wilderness*, 174-175.

[23] Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 61.

[24] Ibid., 63.

[25] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 216.

The idealized vision of Muir that comes through in his published writings and appearance obscures his deep attachments to family, friends, and the social, economic, and political currents of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. His ranch home in Martinez provides for a more nuanced and complete picture of Muir during this pivotal period, representing the social and domestic worlds behind his emergence as a nationally significant figure in conservation. The property reveals tensions and intersections between the various sides of Muir as the solitary mountaineer, the wealthy grower and breadwinner, and the passionate advocate for conservation. As such, it helps situate Americans' impulse to celebrate and preserve nature as part of the experience of industrialization rather than simply a rejection of it.

NHL Criteria Evaluation

Criterion 1

The Strenztel-Muir Ranch is significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with important events in the history of American conservation including the establishment of Yosemite National Park in 1890, the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892, the creation and expansion of early national forest reserves, and the battle over the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. Muir's marriage to Louie Strentzel and role in the management of the Strentzels' extensive Martinez fruit ranch provided him with the financial security, social connections, and family support necessary to commit himself to the movement. His writing and advocacy during his years in Martinez influenced major figures in conservation, including President Theodore Roosevelt, and were instrumental to the establishment of early national parks and forest reserves.

Muir had already gained some fame as an author by the time of his marriage in 1880. Early articles on the Yosemite region in the *New York Tribune* and *Overland Monthly* in 1871 brought him to the attention of publishers, scientists, and intellectuals. Additional writings drawn from his mountaineering experiences continued to appear in East and West Coast periodicals during the 1870s, establishing his reputation as a keen observer and interpreter of the natural world.[26] Muir was pleased that he could earn income as a writer but found the work tedious and inadequate for fully conveying the beauty of the natural world. "No amount of word-making will ever make a single soul to *know* these mountains," he wrote in his journal in 1872. "One day's exposure to mountains is better than cartloads of books."[27]

The years immediately following his wedding and move to the Strentzel ranch marked an interlude in his writing career. In 1881, Muir took up the position of ranch manager on behalf of his father-in-law. He soon found the work almost as disagreeable as writing. In 1883, he complained to an editor that he was "lost and choked in agricultural needs," and worried to a friend that he was "degenerating into a machine for making money."[28] A sense of security with a home and family, combined with his dislike for writing, may have helped him overcome his frustrations, and he devoted himself to ranch work through the 1880s.[29] Donald Worster further suggests that "practical, intelligent management and a sense of responsibility were virtues deeply engrained in Muir's temperament," and that these aspects of his character motivated him to commit to farm life even as it took him away from his beloved wild places.[30]

Biographer Linnie Marsh Wolfe describes Muir's period as ranch manager as a time in which he "learned to

[26] Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 56.

[27] John Muir, "Mountain Thoughts," ca. 1872 in *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, edited by Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), 95.

[28] Quoted in Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 72.

[29] Ibid., 73.

[30] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 277.

live and work with men and women, and to understand and utilize social institutions."[31] He became settled with business obligations and responsibility for a family, which eventually included two daughters: Wanda, born in 1881, and Helen, born in 1886. "It is not now so easy a matter to wing hither and thither like a bird," Muir wrote soon after Wanda's birth, "for here is a wife and a baby and a home."[32] Muir's marriage into the prominent Strentzel family also elevated his social standing, and his role in managing the estate's orchards earned him a significant income, "more money than I thought I would ever need for my family or for all expenses of travel and study," he later recalled.[33] The period marked a major change from his humble youth in rural Wisconsin and his years as a wandering botanist and mountaineer.

With Muir devoted to farm work during the 1880s, his friends missed his voice in the nation's periodicals and attempted to push or pull him back to his writing desk.[34] He finally relented in 1887 by agreeing to edit a two-volume anthology titled *Picturesque California and the Region West of the Rocky Mountains, from Alaska to Mexico*. Muir also contributed six chapters to the book—four reworked earlier articles on Mount Shasta and the Sierra Nevada, plus two new chapters on the Pacific Northwest.[35] This was enough to convince Robert Underwood Johnson, associate editor of *The Century Magazine*, that Muir was ready to accept more writing commissions. A meeting with Muir in San Francisco in 1889 produced an invitation to Martinez, which in turn led to the two men travelling through the Yosemite region in June of that year.

Johnson was struck by the contrast between Yosemite as Muir had described it in the early 1870s and the same country after nearly two decades of commercial grazing, logging, and tourism development. He determined to use his lobbying expertise to advocate for a national park to protect the area, provided that Muir wrote two articles for *Century* describing Yosemite and its environs.[36] The resulting "Treasures of the Yosemite," published in August 1890, and "Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park" appearing the following month were instrumental in making the park a reality. Johnson later recalled that while other individuals and organizations were involved, "Muir's writings and enthusiasm were the chief forces that inspired the movement. All the other torches were lighted from his."[37] The same bill that authorized Yosemite National Park also designated two additional national parks in the Sierra Nevada: General Grant and Sequoia. While Yellowstone (established in 1872) was the first national park, the three Sierra Nevada parks formed a true national park system, which, along with the system of national forest reserves (later renamed national forests), became the cornerstones of federal conservation policy.[38]

The *Century* articles also marked Muir's true emergence as an advocate for conservation.[39] His published writings from the 1870s were primarily scientific and descriptive in nature. Only a few made direct calls for preservation. This included an 1876 letter to the *Sacramento Record Union* outlining threats to the Sequoia forests of the Sierra Nevada.[40] He also helped write two bills in 1881 for the protection of forest lands in the Southern Sierra.[41] The bills failed to make it out of committee in the U.S. Senate and were among Muir's last

[31] Linnie Marsh Wolfe, "Introduction" in *John of the Mountains*, xiv.
[32] Quoted in Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 71.
[33] John Muir, "Autobiography," in William F. Badè, ed., *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, Volume 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), 194.
[34] Thurman Wilkins, *John Muir: Apostle of Nature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 164.
[35] Ibid., 164-166.
[36] Ibid., 169-172.
[37] Robert Underwood Johnson, "John Muir as I Knew Him," January 6, 1916 in *John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings* ed. Terry Gifford (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1996), 876.
[38] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 320.
[39] Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 106.
[40] John Muir, "God's First Temples: How Shall We Preserve Them?" *Sacramento Record Union*, February 5, 1876.
[41] Charles W. Snell, Ray H. Mattison, William Brown, Horace J. Shelly, Jr. and S. Sydney Bradford, *Conservation of Natural*

writing projects before he turned his focus to ranch work. The *Century* articles represented a more serious commitment to conservation and were written specifically for the purpose of building support for legislation to preserve Yosemite's scenery and natural resources. The articles also reached a larger national audience than his previous writings and established Muir as a distinct voice in the political arena.

Much of Muir's career in conservation would center on the Italianate Strentzel house built in 1882, which he and his family moved into after Dr. Strentzel's death in October 1890. Prior to that time, John, Louie, and their daughters lived in the original family ranch house located about a mile south near the family burial plot. Also with the passing of his father-in-law, John and Louie assumed responsibility for an estate worth a substantial fortune in land, livestock, farm equipment, and shares in various business ventures. During the 1890s, the family sold or leased portions of the ranch to further support Muir's travel and writing. Preferring the comforts of their orchard home to camping with John, Louie encouraged her husband to pursue his passion, even when it took him away from the family for extended periods. She also capably managed the ranch's finances during his travels. Financially secure and with the support of his family, John was largely free to devote himself to conservation.

While writing remained a burden, Muir's dedication to the cause, together with the urging of other leaders in the movement, led him to restart his publishing career. From a converted bedroom office he dubbed "the scribble den," Muir produced seven books drawn primarily from his earlier experiences, together with enough notes and other materials for five posthumous volumes.[42] These works were intended not merely to inform readers, but to convince them of what he saw as need for a greater connection with and preservation of the wild places of the world. He supplemented his books with a string of articles, open letters, interviews, speeches, and similar activities that further elevated his voice in the conservation movement.[43]

In 1892, Muir was asked to serve as the first president of the Sierra Club, an organization of California mountain enthusiasts modeled initially on the Appalachian Mountain Club of New England. The club's founders included prominent California scientists, professors, artists, and attorneys who shared Muir's interest in getting people to the mountains so they would be persuaded to join the battle to save them. Muir accepted the role of president with some reluctance, complaining in an 1895 address that "this formal, legal, un-wild work is out of my line." At the same time, he felt a moral obligation to continue. "The battle we have fought, and are still fighting, for the forests is a part of the eternal conflict between right and wrong, and we cannot expect to see the end of it," he said.[44]

During Muir's presidency, the Sierra Club grew into one of the nation's foremost conservation organizations, leading battles to return the Yosemite Valley to federal management, expanding the system of forest reserves, creating new national parks, and preserving redwood and sequoia groves in California. In 1901, the club began hosting month-long summer outings known as "High Trips" in the Sierra Nevada with the goal of building support for preservation. While other members handled much of the responsibility of managing the organization, Muir served as its figurehead, providing vision and direction to its activities.[45]

Freedom from farm work also allowed Muir to travel widely. In 1893, he accompanied Robert Underwood

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Resources, Theme XIX, National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1963: 65.

[42] Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 103.

[43] Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 106.

[44] John Muir, "The National Parks and Forest Reservations," Proceedings of the Meeting of the Sierra Club. November 23, 1895, https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/nat_parks_forests_1896.aspx.

[45] This history is documented in Michael Cohen, *History of the Sierra Club* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988).

Johnson to New York and Washington D.C. where they met with prominent scientists, writers, government leaders, and businessmen. After a series of luncheons and champagne dinners in his honor, Muir wrote home: "I had no idea I was so well known, considering how little I've written."[46] Trips to Oregon and Washington allowed for explorations of Mount Rainier and the Cascades. Muir also built a relationship with the Mazamas, a sister organization with the Sierra Club based in the Pacific Northwest, joining them to advocate for the establishment of Mount Rainier National Park. In 1896, he participated in the inaugural United States Forestry Commission survey of the Cascades and Northern Rockies. The Commission's recommendations—supported by Muir's sharply-worded article "The American Forests" published in *The Atlantic* in 1897—led to new forest management policies, changes in timber and mining laws, and the creation of thirteen new forest reserves and eventually two national parks: Mount Rainier in 1899 and Grand Canyon in 1919.[47]

In 1899, Muir joined the country's leading scientists on the Harriman Expedition, a research voyage to Alaska organized by railroad magnate Edward H. Harriman. Despite Muir's lack of formal education, the other participants considered him the "foremost investigator" of glaciers.[48] Other travels included an expedition to the Canadian Rockies in 1897; multiple trips to Yosemite and the Southern Sierra; a world tour from 1903 to 1904 with Harvard botanist Charles Sargent that took him through Europe, North Africa, Asia, Australia, and Hawai'i; and a 1905 survey of the Petrified Forest in Arizona which led to the site's designation as a national monument in 1906.[49]

Muir's rising stature within the movement brought him to the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt, who considered the management of natural resources to be an issue of national importance. In 1903, Roosevelt invited Muir to accompany him on a trip through Yosemite, which Muir regarded as an opportunity to "*do some forest good* in talking freely about the campfire."[50] The rapport between the two men prompted Roosevelt to issue an executive order realizing Muir's long-held goal of expanding the Sierra Forest Reserve north to Mount Shasta, and set a precedent for the tripling of total forest reserve acreage during Roosevelt's administration.[51] Muir's work also inspired California congressman William Kent to insist on the name "Muir Woods" for the grove of coast redwoods in Marin County that he donated to the federal government for a national monument in 1907.

Even as they embraced Muir's ideas and welcomed his counsel, both Kent and Roosevelt were among those sympathetic to a more utilitarian view of conservation. This philosophy, exemplified by Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot, promoted efficient use of the nation's natural resources to benefit the greatest number of people. The contrast between this position and Muir's preference for preservation, which emphasized the aesthetic and recuperative values of wilderness, began to force a division in the conservationist ranks that would come to a head in the national debate over the fate of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park.

The City of San Francisco began pursuing development of the Tuolumne River running through Hetch Hetchy Valley as a municipal water supply as a part of its efforts to rebuild after the great earthquake of 1906. Several prominent Sierra Club members supported the project as necessary for California's economic development and to counter the monopoly then held by the Spring Mountain Water Company. John Muir and William E. Colby,

[46] John Muir to Louie Muir, June 13, 1893 in Badè, *Life and Letters of John Muir*, 266.

[47] Gerald W. Williams and Char Miller, "At the Creation: The National Forest Commission of 1896-97," *Forest History Today* (Spring/ Fall 2005): 40; John Muir, "The American Forests," *The Atlantic Monthly* 80, no. 368 (August 1897): 145-157.

[48] Dennis R. Dean, "Muir and Geology" in *John Muir: Life and Work*, edited by Sally M. Miller (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 188.

[49] Sierra Club, "Chronology."

[50] Quoted in Wilkins, *John Muir*, 215 (emphasis original).

[51] Ibid., 218.

originator of the club's High Trip outings, were among those who opposed the plan on philosophical and aesthetic grounds. They were hampered by the fact that the national parks did not have their own administrative agency, and thus no enforcement mechanism for resource protection. Others such as Sierra Club co-founder Warren Olney believed that a reservoir would be in the best public interest and would enhance Yosemite's appeal as a tourist destination. Muir and Colby responded by forming the Society for the Preservation of National Parks, which drew members from around the country and brought the issue of Hetch Hetchy to the national consciousness.[52]

Muir's book *The Yosemite* (1912), written in his Martinez scribble den, contained his best-known denunciation of the reservoir proposal, which he cast in distinctly religious terms: "These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar. Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man."[53] Muir's tone here and in other writings on Hetch Hetchy reflected a hostility toward self-serving commercialism, materialism, and greed that had become more prominent in his writings as he transitioned to politics and as the nation's mountains and forests came under greater threat from extractive industries. With Hetch Hetchy at risk, Muir escalated his attacks, gaining allies (including many women's organizations) but also putting himself at odds with members of the cultural and political elite who had aided his ascendance as a voice in conservation.

In presenting Hetch Hetchy as a sacred space akin to a cathedral, Muir and his supporters also advanced a broader tactic of the national parks movement to equate America's natural heritage to the cultural religious heritage of Europe.[54] Muir knew his audience and understood the power such a construction would have in countering the economic arguments of the dam's proponents. Muir was also calling into question a common sentiment about the meaning of progress. For Muir, the impulse to preserve natural beauty, not the ability to harness natural resources for use and profit, represented the true marker of progress. "Garden- and park-making goes on everywhere with civilization," he wrote, "for everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul."[55]

Missing from Muir's framing of the issue, and from the broader debate between utilitarian and preservationist impulses, was the perspective of the Miwok and Paiute communities whose traditional territories included the Hetch Hetchy Valley.[56] Muir was not ignorant of the valley's historical importance to these communities. In a letter to President Roosevelt in 1907, he described it as an "acorn orchard" for the area's Native inhabitants before the 1851 Mariposa Battalion forced most of the population from the region.[57] Muir also referenced the Miwok names of the valley's most prominent rock face, Kolana, and its two waterfalls, Tueeulala and Wapama.[58] Beyond these acknowledgments, Muir expressed little concern that the loss of Hetch Hetchy would also entail the destruction of an ancestral homeland with deep significance to surviving Native communities.

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[52] Cohen, *Sierra Club*, 28; Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 139-147.

[53] John Muir, *The Yosemite* (New York: The Century Co., 1912), 261-262. This quote first appeared in print in a 1908 article for the *Sierra Club Bulletin*, which Muir later revised and included as a chapter in *The Yosemite*.

[54] Kevin DeLuca and Anne Demo, "Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carleton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness," *Environmental History* 6, No. 4 (October 2001): 551.

[55] John Muir, "The Hetch Hetchy Valley," *Sierra Club Bulletin* 6. No. 4 (January 1908): 217.

[56] Bruce Pierini, "How did the Hetch Hetchy Project Impact Native Americans?" *Snowy Range Reflections: Journal of Sierra Nevada History & Biography* 6, no. 1 (2015), https://ejournals.sierracollege.edu/jsnhb/v6n1/pierini.html.

[57] John Muir to [Theodore Roosevelt], September 9, 1907, Reel 16, Image 0989, John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California (hereafter cited as JMP).

[58] John Muir, "The Endangered Valley: The Hetch Hetchy Valley in the Yosemite National Park," *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography by Kimes*, 302, University of the Pacific University Libraries, https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/jmb/302. The name *Hetch Hetchy* is also believed to be derived from the Miwok term *hatchhatchie*, meaning "edible grasses."

The Miwok appear in his writings as part of the valley's romantic past, no longer present to speak for the land as their own. While Muir's use of Eurocentric religious iconography may have earned him support among many middle- and upper-class urban whites, it also exemplified a larger failure of preservationists to link environmental protection with justice for Native Americans.

Despite the best efforts of Muir and his allies, the utilitarian ideal supported throughout the Hetch Hetchy battle by presidents Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson ultimately carried the day when Wilson signed the Raker Act approving the project on December 19, 1913. Muir felt the loss deeply. His death from pneumonia little more than a year later led to popular depictions of him as a martyr to the cause of environmental preservation and helped ensure that "Hetch Hetchy" would be a watchword for the conservation movement to the present day.[59]

Criterion 2

The Strentzel-Muir Ranch is additionally significant under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with the life of John Muir as a nationally significant figure in American conservation. The property offers unique opportunities to explore the various influences on Muir's life and to understand him as a multifaceted individual with responsibilities as a husband, father, agriculturalist, author, and advocate for the natural world. Its diverse resources—including the Strentzel-Muir House and grounds, the rolling hills and remnant orchards of Mount Wanda, and the contemplative Strentzel-Muir Gravesite—speak to Muir's deep ties to family and friends, to the agricultural economy of California, and to the political and social currents of the Progressive Era.

Muir did not settle into domesticity easily. Between 1879 and 1881, he made three trips to Alaska: one just after his engagement, one following his wedding day, and another after the birth of his and Louie's first daughter Wanda. With Louie's assistance, Muir eventually accepted his role as family breadwinner and devoted himself to improving the profitability of the Strentzel ranch. His efforts benefited from a booming market for land and fruit in California.[60] Biographer Thurman Wilkins notes that commercial success often made Muir irritable, "for he was beset by an intolerable conflict. The more he improved his trees and vines by grafting, the more he contradicted his dearest principle—that the natural was superior to the cultivated."[61] He was equally troubled by the realization that while birds in the wilderness brought him joy, birds in the ranch's cherry orchards damaged the crop and cut into the profits.[62]

While Muir rarely wrote about his work as ranch manager, references from his letters and journals, together with writings by friends and family members, reveal the intense strain it put on him. His labors left him exhausted and emaciated, a contrast to the healthfulness and vigor of his mountaineering days.[63] The work had him "condemned to penal servitude," he told a visiting friend in 1888.[64] Donald Worster traces Muir's antipathy toward farming back to his childhood experiences, but suggests that his marriage and subsequent commitment

[59] Cohen, *Sierra Club*, 22-33; Norris Hundley, Jr., *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 169-192; Holway R. Jones, *John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1965), 82-169; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 42-43, 64.

[60] Douglas Sackman, "The Fruits of the Home: Re-introducing Muir in his Hybrid Landscape, in between the City and the Wilderness," in "Muir Home Scholars Report," unpublished report, John Muir National Historic Site, June 8, 2010, 5. John Muir National Historic Park, Martinez, California (Hereafter cited as JOMU).

[61] Wilkins, *John Muir*, 160-161.

[62] Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 71-72.

[63] Hickman, "Muir's Orchard Home," 353-354.

[64] Quoted in Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 72.

to the business of ranching marked a tacit acceptance that "nature must, to some extent, be transformed by technology and labor into farms, food, money, and family security."[65]

Muir's ambivalence to agriculture contrasted with the horticultural ideal embraced by his father-in-law. For Dr. Strentzel, fruit growing was more than an economic enterprise but a vehicle for creating more sustainable rural communities. He saw his Martinez ranch as an alternative to the wheat growing monopolies of the post-Gold Rush years which had depleted the soils, scarred the land, and disrupted the stability of traditional farm life. As president of the Alhambra Grange, Strentzel represented a group of like-minded fruit growers who sought the break-up of landed estates in favor of diversified family farms and orchards knit together as cooperative communities. While Muir was comfortable among upper-class reformers like the Strentzels, and while he attended some Grange meetings, he did not share their vision for an agrarian utopia. "Be Grangers if you will but in Heavens name be more than Grangers," he wrote in his journal. "[S]ee Gods forestry Gods horticulture. Do not make a fetisch [*sic*] of a grapevine or a Bartlett pear or Japanese persimmon."[66]

First as ranch manager and later as administrator of the Strentzel estate, Muir continued his father-in-law's practice of raising a variety of fruit crops, but otherwise embraced a more market-oriented approach. He eliminated some less profitable varieties and earned a reputation as a "tough, unyielding businessman" who embodied the Scottish stereotype of the canny negotiator.[67] Muir also made use of his skills as an inventor to improve production. He employed innovative grafting techniques and invented a machine to plant new grape vines in perfectly straight lines.[68] Muir was also careful to ensure that crops were shipped in the best possible shape. He traveled to the Martinez rail station before dawn on a daily basis to collect the best shipping crates, and even convinced municipal officials to remove cobblestone paving leading to the city's wharf so that wagons could roll smoothly and not damage the fruit they carried.[69] Muir's propensity for shrewd business dealing was exemplified by his decision to sell a right-of-way to the Santa Fe Railroad in 1897. Muir apparently regarded the intrusion of an orchard-spanning viaduct as an acceptable loss considering the convenience of a lifetime rail pass and depot located within walking distance of the family house.[70]

Like other commercial fruit growing operations of similar scale in California, the Strenztel-Muir Ranch depended on seasonal laborers, many of whom were Chinese. Following an initial wave during the Gold Rush, Chinese immigration continued to increase even in the face of extreme discrimination and violence. Chinese carved out economic opportunities in placer mining, as merchants, and as laborers on the railroads or in the fishing, timber, and agricultural industries. By 1880, Chinese comprised as much as seventy-five to ninety percent of California's agricultural labor force.[71] Growers were eager to hire Chinese workers because they were inexpensive and relatively self-sufficient. Many also hailed from agricultural regions and were experienced in farm work. Chinese labor became especially valuable for crops requiring specialized knowledge and attention such as olives and grapes, both of which grew on the Strentzel-Muir Ranch.

Rising anti-Chinese sentiment among the white working class culminated in passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act on May 6, 1882. Just over a week before this, a mob reportedly led by Greek and Italian fishermen raided a

[65] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 277-278.
[66] Quoted in Ibid., 285.
[67] Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, 72-73.; Wilkins, *John Muir*, 160.
[68] Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, diary entries, February 22, 1881 and March 14, 1881. JOMU.
[69] Wilkins, *John Muir*, 160.; John H. Briones, interviewed by Ernest Lowe and John M. Jenks, n.d. Folder "Oral History: Swett, Briones, Evans, Colby, and others," JOMU.
[70] The depot that was eventually built was named "Muir Station." Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 387-388.
[71] Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, *Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 32.

Chinese cannery worker bunkhouse at the Martinez waterfront, about two miles from the Strentzel Ranch. The attack left several Chinese workers seriously wounded and at least one dead. The *Contra Costa Gazette* characterized the violence as "a brutal and pusillanimous assault" that "disgraced the name of our town" and likely harmed the cause of restricting Chinese immigration.[72] Muir's views on this event or the issue of Chinese labor migration are not known, although many larger-scale fruit growers in California opposed exclusion out of concern for its impacts on their competitive advantage.[73] Shortly after passage of the Exclusion Act, John's sister Joanna Muir Brown inquired about his opinion on the matter, but no record of a response is known to exist.[74]

While Muir's writings are silent on Chinese exclusion, letters from Louie during his travels suggest the vital role Chinese workers played on the ranch. Their responsibilities ranged from chopping wood and clearing poison oak to crating fruit, pruning and "sulphuring" the grape vines to keep the fruit fresh, keeping birds and squirrels off the crops, and transporting mail.[75] Muir and his family also came to know and depend on some Chinese laborers on a personal level. Their closest ties were with Ah Fong, who worked as the family's cook and caregiver from around 1897 until John's death in 1914. While details about Ah Fong's life and relationship with the family are limited, he was often John's only companion in the mansion after Louie's death in 1905, and likely watched over John in his bouts with illness during his later years.[76] Muir's letters to Helen during this period describe Ah Fong's efforts to keep the house and grounds well-maintained. His responsibilities included cleaning the windows and rugs, dusting, sweeping, pruning and watering the gardens, thinning the peaches, mowing oats at the stables, and cutting hay. Muir also entrusted Ah Fong to select the best grapes, cherries, and pears from the vines and orchards to ship to Helen in Southern California.[77]

Managing the labor force was also apparently a frequent source of frustration for Muir. A letter from Louie to John during his visit to Yellowstone in 1885 expressed her hope that he could find respite from the stresses of ranch life. "Oh, if you could only feel unhurried and able to rest with no thought of the morrow, next week, or next month, nor of any vineyards and Chinamen!" she wrote.[78] While Chinese occupied a subordinate position socially and economically in California during this period, high demand for their labor gave them a measure of agency in negotiating the terms of their employment, including on the Strentzel-Muir property.[79]

Muir's role in overseeing Chinese labor was one of several aspects of ranch life that informed his understanding of wilderness as a reprieve from the mental and physical strains of modern life. In contrast to his in-laws who felt immersed in nature in the Alhambra Valley, Muir came to see the ranch as more closely tied to the city than to nature as he knew it through his mountaineering experiences. In part, this reflected a more expansive "mental geography" gained through his explorations of wild places, but he was also responding to changes in the

[72] Quotes from: *Contra Costa Gazette*, April 29, 1882. Report of at least one death from: "The Chinese Riot," *Contra Costa Gazette*, July 1, 1882.

[73] Majka and Majka, *Farm Workers*, 32-33.

[74] [Joanna Muir Brown] to John Muir, May 30, 1882, Reel 04, Image 0850, JMP.

[75] [Louie Strentzel Muir] to John Muir, September 12, 1885, Reel 05, Image 0435, JMP; Louie [Strentzel Muir] to John Muir, July 12, 1889, Reel 06, Image 0167, JMP; Louie [Strentzel Muir] to John Muir, July 8, 1889, Reel 06, Image 0138, JMP; Louie [Strentzel Muir] to John Muir, September 1, 1895, Reel 08, Image 1155, JMP; [Louie Strentzel Muir] to John Muir, September 12, 1885, Reel 05, Image 0435, JMP.

[76] Sierra Club, "Ah Fong," undated, https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/people/ah_fong.aspx.

[77] John Muir to Helen [Muir], May 14, 1908, Reel 17, Image 0793, JMP; John Muir to Helen [Muir], September 14, 1909, Reel 18, Image 0734, JMP; [John Muir] to [Helen Muir Funk], [June ? 1913], Reel 21, Image 0552, JMP; [John Muir] to Helen [Muir Funk], June 6, 1913, Reel 21, Image 0495, JMP.

[78] Louie [Strentzel Muir] to John Muir, August 28, 1885, Reel 05, Image 0376, JMP.

[79] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 292-293.

agricultural economy of California by the 1880s.[80] The development of the port of Martinez as a hub in the international wheat trade combined with the expansion of railroads, population growth, and the rise of smaller-scale intensive fruit growing as a major sector in the California agricultural economy created a more industrialized landscape than what existed during the Strentzels' time. The same place that offered a pastoral sanctuary for the Strentzels seemed full of dangers to Muir. A severe case of poison oak acquired while clearing brush for a drainage ditch in 1881 left him swollen, covered in rashes, and bed-ridden for days. A chemical explosion in the fall of 1882 that nearly killed him led him to declare to a friend that "You're not safe a day in this sordid world of money-grubbing men."[81]

While Louie often expressed concern for her husband's safety during his travels, John fretted about hazards to his family at home, especially his younger daughter Helen. He worried about sickness, excessive heat, spoiled food, and exposure to "bad water or sewer gas."[82] He eventually had Dr. Strentzel's carp pond filled in out of fear that his daughters would catch fevers from its heated vapors. In writings composed in the scribble den, Muir contrasted the hazards of modern life as he experienced it in the industrializing Bay Area with the healthfulness of wild places. "No American wilderness that I know of is so dangerous as a city home with all the modern improvements," he proclaimed in *Our National Parks*. "One should go to the woods for safety, if for nothing else."[83]

The physical and psychological toll of ranch life also informed one of Muir's most important and seemingly contradictory insights: that wilderness could constitute a true "home" for humanity even as it remained free of the works of humankind. His best-known line comes from *Our National Parks*: "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home."[84] The idea was prescriptive, meant to encourage readers to seek out connection with non-human nature as a recuperative experience. For Muir, going to the wilderness met a basic need that modern life in cities and even in the rural landscape of the Alhambra Valley left unfulfilled.

Lost in the apparent universality of Muir's assertion is that it spoke mainly to relatively affluent whites like himself with the means to temporarily escape the strains of modern life through visits to far off wilderness. While Muir never directly called for denying anyone the opportunity to experience the mountains as he did, he also never fully considered the structural inequities that reserved wilderness as an enclave for white leisure. For example, Muir and those responsive to his ideas had little cause to ask how Chinese agricultural workers such as those on the Strenztel-Muir Ranch understood and valued nature. Many readers of Muir were inclined to view Chinese and other immigrant or non-white working-class populations as part of the modern urbanizing world that wilderness offered a retreat from. Nor did Muir reflect on how his ideas might be in tension with the historical reality of the mountains as Native homelands whose actual inhabitants had only recently been forcibly removed or reduced to small numbers by disease, colonial violence, and enslavement. Such omissions exemplify what environmental journalist Rebecca Solnit has described as "the peculiarities, blindnesses, raptures and problems that constitute the Euro-American experience of landscape."[85] In claiming a universal home in the mountains, Muir and those who embraced his ideas concealed the historical and cultural specificity of his environmental vision. Muir's call to seek a home in wilderness may have been framed as a critique of industrialization, but it depended on the same forms of labor exploitation and the same literal and figurative

[80] Hickman, "John Muir's Orchard Home," 355.
[81] Quoted in Ibid., 355.
[82] Quoted in Ibid., 356.
[83] Quoted in Ibid., 358.
[84] Quoted in Ibid., 336.
[85] Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Hidden Wars of the American West*, twentieth anniversary edition with a new preface (Berkley: University of California Press, 2014), 221.

removal of Native Americans from the landscape that were required to sustain the expansion of industry.

Critics of Muir have further suggested that in looking to the wilderness as a spiritual and intellectual home, he turned away from his actual ranch home in Martinez.[86] Muir's environmental philosophy clearly privileged the distant mountains over cultivated landscapes. He also at times expressed frustration with domestic responsibilities that took him away from what he considered his "real work" in preservation.[87]

Despite such feelings, Muir remained committed to his role as husband, father, and family breadwinner. Letters home during his travels reveal deep affection for Louie and their daughters. He provided stability for his siblings after the death of their father in 1885, offering financial support and inviting his older sister Maggie and younger brother David to live on the property in 1891 and 1892 respectively. Following the death of Dr. Strentzel in 1890, Muir also set about adapting the mansion to better suit the needs of his family. One of the first priorities was to provide more convenient and accessible living accommodations for his mother-in-law Louisiana Strentzel in the first-floor parlor. He also constructed a three-story south wing addition to provide servants' quarters, a music room for Louie and the girls, and attic space for a large capacity water tank.

Contrary to his public image as a solitary mountaineer, Muir also welcomed social interaction. He talked with everyone he met, maintained regular correspondence with friends, family members, and colleagues around the country, and often hosted guests at the family home for meetings, meals, and overnight stays. A few guests stayed for weeks and occasionally a relative would remain for a year or more. One frequent visitor was Scottish landscape painter William Keith. Muir enjoyed bantering with his fellow Scot while Mrs. Strentzel suggested subjects for the artist to paint.[88] Author and friend Charles Keeler recalled Muir leading "strolls about his broad acres of fruit and vine."[89] Muir was known as an engaging storyteller. He also enjoyed giving gold coins to children and gifts of books and fruit to friends.[90]

When it came time to compose correspondence and meet publishing deadlines, Muir required a private space away from the company of friends and family. Rather than using Dr. Strentzel's office and library on the first floor, he established his writing room in the northwest upstairs bedroom where it was brighter and somewhat isolated from the bustle of the household. From the north window he could see across the orchards to Martinez and the Carquinez Strait.[91] Muir was easily bothered and so sensitive to noise that Louie and their daughters whispered and tiptoed when he was making what he called "booksellers' bricks" in his study.[92] His construction of a soundproof music room for Wanda's violin and Helen's guitar playing in the south addition served to minimize distraction. Louie would only play piano when John was traveling.[93] As important deadlines loomed, Muir often rented a hotel room in San Francisco until he completed his project.

While he mainly looked to the mountains for an authentic connection to nature, Muir could also find inspiration in nature on the farm. Admiring a morning view of Mount Diablo, he noted in his journal: "Nature is always

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[86] Especially Hickman, "Muir's Orchard Home."

[87] John Muir, "January-July 1895, Ranch Life (Martinez, California)," April 25, 1895. Reel 28, JMP.

[88] Jean Hanna Clark and Shirley Sargent, *Dear Papa: Letters between John Muir and His Daughter Wanda* (Fresno, CA: Panorama West Books, 1983), 28.

[89] Charles Keeler, "Recollections of John Muir," in *John Muir: His Life and Letters*, 880.

[90] Daryl Morrison, "John Muir and the Bairns: Muir and his Relationship with Children," in *John Muir: Family, Friends, and Adventures*, edited by Sally M. Miller and Daryl Morrison (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 54.

[91] Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, 27.

[92] Ibid., 28.

[93] Sally Johnson Ketcham, *Historic Furnishings Report, John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California* (Harper's Ferry: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, Harper's Ferry Center, February 1971; revised 1982), 24.

lovely, invincible, glad, whatever is done and suffered by her creatures. All scars she heals, whether in rocks or water or sky or hearts."[94]

The hilltops to the south and west—which Muir kept uncultivated and free of livestock—were a favorite destination for long walks and storytelling. He gave the two highest summits the names Mount Wanda and Mount Helen after his daughters. Louie was fond of picnics, and the family often packed a basket and ranged over the hills until they found a suitable spot for lunch. When not away on travel, Muir joined in these excursions, typically reciting his favorite verses by Robert Burns. He welcomed the opportunity to share his love of nature with his daughters. A journal entry from April 12, 1895 conveyed his feelings:

> Another lovely day, mostly solid sunshine. Took a fine fragrant walk up the West Hills with Wanda and Helen, who I am glad to see love walking, flowers, trees, and every bird and beast and creeping thing. Buttercup, clover, gilia, Brodiæa, Allium, Dodecatheon, larkspur, and portulacas are in flower. The oaks are in full leaf. A fine fragrant walk, the babies delighted.[95]

Jean Hanna Clark, Wanda's daughter, wrote about her mother's and aunt's tales of their walks with Muir in *Dear Papa, Letters between John Muir and His Daughter Wanda*:

> Lessons in botany were part of [their] walks for not even a tiny bloom escaped his eyes. They saw hillsides blue with brodiæa or larkspur, a rocky slope bright with red Indian paint brush, or an open glade knee deep in buttercups. They knew cool, damp dells under the laurels where maidenhair ferns grew beside a little spring. They loved the buckeye balls that were just sprouting, and acorns that had lain in the damp leaf mold until life was stirring within. Muir named one of the hills in Alhambra Valley Mount Wanda, and another Mount Helen. It is no wonder that his daughters missed him sorely, even when he was as close as San Francisco.[96]

Louie Muir died of pneumonia and a lung tumor in 1905, leaving her shares of the Strentzel-Muir Ranch to Wanda and Helen. Devastated by the loss, John returned to the desert of northern Arizona where, at the time of Louie's diagnosis, he had been staying with Helen while she convalesced from illness. There, the forests of petrified wood provided a welcome distraction and his subsequent research helped convince President Theodore Roosevelt to declare the area a National Monument in 1906. John returned to Martinez in between travels to write but his life there was never the same after Louie's passing.[97]

Following the marriages of Wanda in 1906 and Helen in 1910, their father continued to live in the mansion with only the company of the family's long-time caregiver and cook Ah Fong. John frequently visited Wanda's family at the Martinez Adobe for meals and to play with his grandchildren. Still, the emptiness of the large house weighed on him, especially after his defeat in the Hetch Hetchy debate. Robert B. Marshall of the United States Geological Survey later wrote, "It was sorrowful indeed to see him sitting in his cobwebbed study in his lonely house…with the full force of his defeat upon him, after the struggle of a lifetime in the service of Hetch Hetchy."[98]

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[94] Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains*, 337.
[95] Ibid., 338.
[96] Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, 28.
[97] Ibid., *Dear Papa*, 87.
[98] Quoted in Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 335.

Muir began renovating the house in 1914, hoping to convince his daughters to live there again. He bought new carpets and rugs for the first floor and painted some of the dark woodwork a lighter shade. Most surprisingly, Muir, who preferred candlelight, had electricity installed in the house.[99] On December 3, 1914, John wrote to Helen: "There is no one in the old house except myself. If I could only have you and Wanda as in the auld land syne, it would be lovely. I have got electric light now in the house and everything has been put in comparative order."[100] John's hopes of reuniting the family were not to be, as he died of pneumonia only three weeks later while on a visit to Helen in Southern California. Muir was buried alongside his wife and in-laws in the family burial plot on the banks of Alhambra Creek. His service was held under the large eucalyptus tree which still stands at the site today.

Historic Context: John Muir and the American Conservation Movement

John Muir's emergence as a national leader in conservation occurred during a period of industrialization with significant impacts on the natural environment. During the early nineteenth century, the lands of the United States were mostly open to private exploitation with minimal safeguards to protect against damage or depletion of natural resources. Most local, state, and federal land policies were written to facilitate the transfer of the public domain to private interests to encourage economic development. By mid-century, a small number of eastern intellectuals and scientists began to speak out about the wanton destruction of the nation's natural heritage.[101] Some rural communities in the Northeast also adopted a communitarian ethic to ensure the long term availably of essential resources.[102] However, the few laws put in place during the mid-nineteenth century to place limits on resource extraction were largely ineffective, and most Americans continued to regard the nation's forests and undeveloped lands as an inexhaustible source of material wealth.

With his 1864 publication of *Man and Nature*, Vermont writer George Perkins Marsh stimulated a broader awareness of the threats posed by unregulated exploitation of the nation's natural resources. Marsh was particularly concerned with deforestation. Drawing on principles of European forestry, he advocated public oversight of forests to minimize the impacts of timber cutting on fisheries, game, and water supplies. Marsh's ideas influenced legislation to create a federal forestry agent in 1876. They also inspired early efforts to protect forested watersheds, including the push to reserve the Adirondack Mountains in New York as a state forest preserve in 1885.[103]

Population expansion and increasing demand for natural resources also prompted growing national concern about the loss of wild and scenic places, particularly in the West. Promotional literature and travel writing popularized the Yosemite Valley as a tourist destination by the 1850s, eventually leading to its reservation as a state park in 1864.[104] Railroads and other commercial tourism interests also played a role in the designation of Yellowstone as America's first national park in 1872.[105]

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[99] John Muir to Helen [Muir Funk], December 3, 1914, Reel 22, Image 0811, JMP.

[100] Quoted in Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 347.

[101] Sneed, et al., *Conservation of Natural Resources*, ch. 2.

[102] Richard W. Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[103] David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); David Stradling, "Introduction," in *Conservation in the Progressive Era: Classic Texts*, edited by David Stradling (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 4.

[104] Andrew Kirk and Lincoln Bramwell, *The Yosemite Way: An Administrative History of Yosemite National Park* (2007), 27. Draft on file with the National Park Service, Interior Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12, Seattle, Washington.

[105] Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 7-11.

Muir emerged as a leading voice for preservation as the scenic landscapes of the West were becoming at once more accessible and under greater threat from extractive industries such as mining, logging, and grazing. His writings produced from his Martinez scribble den both reflected and shaped an emerging aesthetic ideal that valued spectacular natural landscapes more for their intrinsic and inspirational qualities than their economic potential. Responding to the various environmental threats and psychological pressures accompanying industrialization, Muir called on Americans to embrace the "natural inherited wildness in our blood" that he felt had drawn him to nature.[106] He saw the preservation of wild places as necessary for maintaining what he viewed as an inherent human connection to nature that was being severed in the context of urban industrial expansion.

Muir drew his ideas from a variety of intellectual traditions as well as his own life experiences. Rejecting his father's rigid Calvinism, he blended a naturalistic Christian pantheism with a proto-ecological understanding of the interconnectedness of nature. From the transcendentalists he gained an appreciation for non-human nature as essential nourishment for mind, body, and spirit.[107] Donald Worster suggests that Muir's ideas also emerged from a broader "revolutionary movement" focused on the advancement of "liberal democratic ideals" including human rights, liberty, and equality.[108] While Muir rarely spoke out on the social issues of the time (and while no record of his voting exists), his early experiences, particularly his journey through the South, inspired him to consider the value of non-human nature in the framework of "rights." The notion that the moral significance inherent to humanity should extend to the non-human world became one of his most important contributions to environmental thought in the United States.[109]

Muir's aesthetic appreciation for nature and leanings toward biocentrism distinguished him from other leaders in conservation. His "preservationist" stance has most often been contrasted with the "utilitarian conservation" of Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the United States Forest Service. Whereas Muir primarily valued nature for its own sake and for its inspirational and recuperative qualities, Pinchot urged scientific management of natural resources for long term public use. Historians have often pitted Muir and Pinchot on opposite sides of a hard ideological split in conservation, particularly in the context of the battle over Hetch Hetchy.[110] However, their positions differed more in degree than in kind. Muir advanced utilitarian principles in forest management where he felt it was appropriate and participated in early surveys that led to the establishment of the first national forest reserves. In the 1890s, Pinchot regarded Muir as a mentor and supported designation of new national parks.[111] Sierra Club members during the years of Muir's leadership also navigated between the two views, valuing certain landscapes as worthy of a high level of preservation while seeing others as important for extractive uses.[112]

Although they disagreed over the highest and best use of Hetch Hetchy, Muir and Pinchot shared a common concern that unregulated exploitation of nature for private profit threatened the nation's most important natural resources. Their ideas were linked with the emergence of the Progressive Movement between the 1890s and

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[106] John Muir, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 2.

[107] Mark R. Stoll, "God and John Muir: A Psychological Interpretation of John Muir's Life and Religion," in *John Muir: Life and Work*, 64-81.; James Brannon, "Radical Transcendentalism: Emerson, Muir and the Experience of Nature," *John Muir Newsletter* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2006), https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/john_muir_newsletter/radical_transcendentalism.aspx.

[108] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 5.

[109] Ibid., 8, 121-122, 136-137.

[110] See especially Fox, *American Conservation Movement*.

[111] Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2001), 5. Miller writes that Pinchot maintained "what might seem to be contradictory impulses – the desire to live simultaneously within and on nature, to exult in its splendors while exploiting its resources."

[112] Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69.

1910s. The setting aside of large tracts of land as national parks and forest reserves became a core tenet of the Progressive agenda, which was defined by concern with the excesses of private industry, confidence in scientific expertise, and use of federal, state, and municipal governments to solve problems for the common good. Progressivism formed the political context for President Theodore Roosevelt's establishment of national parks and forest reserves. It also gave rise to local reform movements focused on urban environments. While not part of Muir's agenda, public health reforms and efforts to regulate industrial smoke emissions and water pollution also became part of the environmental legacy of the Progressive Era.[113]

Muir shared with other Progressives a high regard for science as a lens for understanding the natural world. Even without completing a formal scientific education, Muir made significant contributions in the field of geology. His field observations in California and Alaska were especially important in drawing attention to the role of glaciers in shaping the North American landscape. He was well-versed in botany and acquired a vast collection of botanical samples from his travels around the world.[114] Muir was also among the first naturalists to describe the natural world in ecological terms, famously observing, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."[115] Historian Ronald Limbaugh notes, however, that while Muir can be credited with contributing to the development of modern ecological thinking, he did not specifically frame preservation in terms of ecological science. Particularly in his later writings, he mainly touted the benefits of wilderness to people, rather than for biotic diversity, habitat sustainability, "or for any other reason that could be considered part of the basic arsenal of ecological science."[116]

Muir's published writings also reflected gender biases common for the time. He rarely mentioned his wife, daughters, sisters, and female acquaintances and tended to default to male pronouns in his personifications of wild plants and animals.[117] Additionally, while many women in Muir's life were active in the suffrage movement and while he sympathized with them, he never explicitly lent his support to the cause. Donald Worster observes that Muir tended to miss the ways in which gendered social expectations and obligations constrained women, including by limiting their ability to join his impulsive mountain excursions.[118]

At the same time, Muir exhibited a sensitivity to nature that contrasted with the "hyper-macho" persona embodied in other prominent conservationists including Theodore Roosevelt. Whereas Roosevelt mainly looked to wilderness to restore "true manhood," Muir expressed compassion for wildlife and appreciation for natural beauty. He also frequently relied on the counsel of women, such as Jeanne Carr, Annie Bidwell, and Mary Swett, and enjoyed opportunities to share his love of nature with his wife, daughters, and mother-in-law in Martinez.[119] Historian Susan Schrepfer links Muir's vision of nature to a broader refashioning of gender roles following the Civil War. Just as men looked to the mountains to reinvigorate their masculinity, women were creating their own "feminine sublime" that emphasized intimacy with nature and a "keen awareness of the life forces that flowed through the physical world and themselves."[120] Muir's notion of a "home" in wilderness blended these masculine and feminine conceptions of nature, offering a "domestic vision of the sublime" that

[113] For an overview refer to Stradling, "Introduction" in *Conservation in the Progressive Era*.
[114] Bonnie Johanna Gisel and Stephen J. Joseph, *Nature's Beloved Son: Rediscovering John Muir's Botanical Legacy* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2008).
[115] Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 110.
[116] Ronald Limbaugh, "Introduction: John Muir's Life and Legacy," in *John Muir: Life and Work*, 10.
[117] Brad Ward, "John Muir: A Rugged, Religious, Sensitive Mountain Man" (master's thesis, Skidmore College, 2009), 7-12.
[118] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 213.
[119] Sackman, "The Fruits of Home," 13.
[120] Susan R. Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 233. As summarized in Sackman, "The Fruits of Home," 14.

became one of his most important legacies.[121] Historian Adam Rome observes that Muir's "sentimentality" for nature and alliances with women's organizations also exposed him to criticism from male political opponents during the battle for Hetch Hetchy.[122]

Muir's life and legacy in conservation has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. Historian William Cronon's 1995 essay "The Trouble with Wilderness" has been particularly important in framing the debate over Muir's environmental worldview. In idealizing distant wild nature, Cronon suggests, Muir and his acolytes ignored the human history of areas they valued as wilderness and shifted the focus of environmental activism away from places where most people actually lived and worked.[123] Historian David Hickman builds on this critique in his examination of Muir's relationship to his "orchard home," arguing that Muir's envisioning of a spiritual home in wilderness correlated with a rejection of his physical home in Martinez.[124] In privileging non-human nature and dismissing his father-in-law's vision of agrarian reform, Hickman concludes, Muir furthered the decline of an earlier horticultural ideal focused on creating more sustainable rural communities.[125]

Historians have also called into question Muir's status as a figurehead of American environmentalism, noting that he represents only one of several pathways of environmental activism that developed in response to the social, economic, and environmental transformations accompanying westward expansion, industrialization, and urbanization.[126] Muir's writings and advocacy during his years in Martinez offered an aesthetic vision of nature that spoke mainly to middle- and upper-class urban whites with whom he most closely identified but offered little to those whose race, class, and gender experiences informed different environmental relationships and attitudes. This put Muir at odds not just with the utilitarian wing of the conservation movement. His environmental vision largely left out Native Americans.[127] It alienated rural communities dependent on access to natural areas for their livelihoods.[128] It also failed to directly confront issues such as urban pollution, worker health and safety, inequities in resource distribution, and lack of access to open space confronting the working class and people of color. These communities developed environmental discourses of their own that linked to social justice concerns and were often in tension with Muir's preservationist agenda.[129]

Others have countered that Muir's legacy in conservation is not as narrowly focused on an idealized vision of non-human wilderness as his critics have claimed. Sierra Club historian Harold Wood, for example, cites Muir's regard for small household gardens and city parks, his effort to preserve a wildflower field at his boyhood home

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[121] Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 235. As summarized in Sackman, "The Fruits of Home," 14.

[122] Adam Rome, "'Political Hermaphrodites': Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America," *Environmental History* 11 (July 2006): 446. As summarized in Sackman, "Fruits of Home," 13-14.

[123] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* edited by William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 69-90. For responses to Cronon's critique refer to J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, eds. *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); and Nelson and Callicott, eds., *The Wilderness Debate Rages On: Continuing the Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[124] Hickman, "Muir's Orchard Home."

[125] Ibid.

[126] Dorceta E. Taylor, "Race, Class, Gender, and American Environmentalism," Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-534, Portland, OR: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station, 2002, 1.

[127] See especially Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Robert H, Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians & National Parks* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998).

[128] Karl Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[129] Taylor, "Race, Class, Gender, and American Environmentalism." Also see Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1993), chs. 1 and 2.

in Wisconsin, and his influence on later movements to preserve nature in urban spaces.[130] Muir's private journals and actions on the ranch further suggest a more expansive regard for nature in its varied forms than comes through in his published writings. While he clearly privileged wild over managed nature and believed that the two were often in conflict, Muir also took steps to ensure their coexistence on his own property. He urged his workers to avoid poisoning predators, once experimenting with the use of peacocks as a rattlesnake deterrent.[131] In 1895, he submitted an editorial to the *San Francisco Call* supporting a local prohibition on the hunting of meadowlarks whose presence on the ranch he enjoyed.[132] Muir also often brought plant specimens from his travels back to the property. This included the giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) which still stands near the Strentzel-Muir House.[133] Muir's sequoia is reminiscent of the Strentzels' practice of landscaping with plants that reminded them of meaningful places and times from their past. Later in his life, Muir looked back fondly on this, writing to a friend that he held "dearly cherished memories about…the fine garden grounds full of trees and bushes and flowers that my wife and father-in-law and I planted—fine things from every land."[134] His decision to keep the oak woodland and grassland hills to the south and west of the mansion uncultivated and free of grazing further exemplified his concern for nature on the farm.

Other scholarship considers Muir in the context of a legacy of racism in conservation.[135] Many of Muir's contemporaries in the movement held explicitly racist views and supported racist policies. Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, Henry Fairfield Osborne, and David Starr Jordan were among those who embraced eugenics, a pseudoscience that promoted selective breeding to favor racial characteristics considered desirable. Geologist Joseph LeConte, an admirer of Muir and co-founder of the Sierra Club, was the son of a Georgia plantation owner who enslaved as many as 200 people.[136] LeConte supported the Confederacy during the Civil War and afterwards used his academic standing to advocate for repression and disenfranchisement of African Americans during Reconstruction.[137] Save the Redwoods League co-founder Madison Grant authored *The Passing of the Great Race: The Racial Basis of European History*, one of the most notoriously racist texts of the twentieth century, which reportedly inspired Adolf Hitler. Many leaders in the movement during Muir's time saw no conflict between protecting nature and upholding white supremacy, with Grant once characterizing both eugenics and conservation as "attempts to save as much as possible of the old America."[138]

Muir was not a member of any eugenics organization even if he associated with many who were. As an immigrant himself, he did not identify with the nativist politics of Grant, Osborne, and others, and never contributed to eugenics publications. He is also not known to have ever endorsed LeConte's anti-Black politics. While Muir appears to have opposed such forms of overt prejudice, his published and unpublished writings

[130] Harold Wood, "John Muir's Legacy is Alive and Well in a World that is 'One Great Dewdrop,'" November 16, 2014, updated November 22, 2014 and October 19, 2016, https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/John_muirs_legacy_is_alive_and_well_in_a_world_that_is_one_great_dewdrop.aspx.

[131] Hickman, "Muir's Orchard Home," 357.

[132] John Muir, "Save the Meadowlarks," *San Francisco Call*, March 24, 1895.

[133] Killon, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 343.

[134] John Muir to Anna R. Dicky, May 1, 1912, in Badè, ed., *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, volume 2, 375.

[135] For a summary of themes and scholarship on this subject see Carolyn Merchant, "Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History," *Environmental History* 8, no. 3 (July 2003): 380-394.

[136] Joseph Le Conte, *The Autobiography of Joseph Le Conte*, edited by William Dallam Armes (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), 9.

[137] See especially Joseph Le Conte, "The Race Problem in the South," in *Man and the State: Studies in Applied Sociology, Lectures and Discussions before the Brooklyn Ethical Association*, Evolution Series, no. 29 (May 1, 1892): 347-402.

[138] Quoted in Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Lebanon, NH: University of Vermont Press, 2009), xiii. Also see Miles Powell, *Vanishing America: Species Extinction, Racial Peril, and the Origins of Conservation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

contain derogatory characterizations that speak to an implicit racialized construction of nature and society in his environmental vision. This is evident early on in his journal of his "thousand-mile walk" through the post-Civil War South in 1867. Although egalitarian in his temperament and interactions with those he met, Muir at times used hurtful language to describe recently emancipated African Americans he encountered along the route.[139] The journal represents an important early expression of Muir's biocentric leanings, while at the same time revealing an inclination to caricature and demean people of color (as well as poor whites). It also reflects an inability or unwillingness to confront the racialized geography of the places he visited and wrote about.

These tendencies are most clearly displayed in Muir's descriptions of Native Americans in his accounts of his early travels in the Yosemite region. He regarded those he encountered as dirty, ugly, and seemingly out of place in nature. In the most commonly cited example, a group of Paiute who begged him for tobacco and alcohol during his first visit to the Sierra Nevada in 1868 struck him as "degraded" and with "no right place in the landscape."[140] Although he afterwards experienced shame at feeling "such desperate repulsion at one's fellow beings," the encounter interrupted his wilderness reverie and he "was glad to see them fading out of sight down the pass."[141]

In writings composed later in his life, Muir expressed greater admiration for Native cultures while reserving his sharpest criticism for whites whom he held responsible for nature's destruction. Time spent with the Tlingkit during his travels to Alaska afforded him a deeper understanding of and respect for their traditional values and way of life. The experience also seems to have heightened his sympathy with Native communities facing violence, sickness, displacement, depletion of subsistence resources, and growing dependence on an introduced cash economy. At a dinner party just after his return from his first trip to Alaska, Muir confronted a U.S. Army colonel who had taken part in "Indian extermination" campaigns. According to Mary Swett's account of the incident, Muir accused the colonel of being "the champion of a mean, brutal policy." Muir later corresponded with an ailing Helen Hunt Jackson, one of the few outspoken white advocates for Native American rights of the time. He also regularly donated funds in support of publisher Charles Lummis's work to find housing for displaced Native Americans, protect their religious practices, and provide education and skills to Native youth.[142]

Muir was also not blind to Native Americans' historical connections to the North American landscape. His writings contain acknowledgements of Native place names as well as descriptions of cultural traditions, medicinal uses of various plants, and subsistence practices, some of which he observed first-hand.[143] He also contrasted their practice of setting fire to the forests to improve their hunting grounds with the far more destructive actions of commercial timber operations. Along with lightning-caused fires, Native burning "seemed to work…only for good in clearing spots here and there for smooth garden prairies, and openings for sunflowers seeking the light."[144] From his point of view, Native Americans impacted the land "hardly more than the birds

[139] See, for example, Muir, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, 51, 52; and Paul Outka, *Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 162-163.

[140] Muir included versions of this encounter in two of his published books. The original journal entry upon which he based the account has not at this time been located. His use of the term "degraded" is from Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 295; "No rightful place in the landscape" is from John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (New York: The Century Co., 1894), 93.

[141] Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 295.

[142] Information in this paragraph, including the Mary Swett quotes, is from Raymond Barnett, "John Muir: Racist or Admirer of Native Americans?" n.d., https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/racist-or-admirer-of-native-americans-raymond-bennett.aspx. Also see John Muir Global Network, "John Muir and Native Americans."

[143] For example, see Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 16, 73, 106, 118, 223.; and Muir, *Our National Parks*, 24, 57, 105, 124, 191, 193, 236, 292.

[144] Muir, "The American Forests," 146.; This also appears in Muir, *Our National Parks*, 335.

and squirrels," leaving its beauty and natural functions intact.[145]

Muir's perspective was conditioned by the circumstances of the time. He encountered the Native populations of California in the midst of a violent genocide which had reduced their numbers by eighty percent or more in a generation and facilitated the dispossession of their traditional land base.[146] This likely caused him to miss the full extent of their imprint on the Sierra landscape. Muir's unflattering descriptions may have also been "more 'literal' than pejorative," as one recent article suggests, given what they had lived through, and perhaps given Muir's limited knowledge of their cultural practices.[147] However, like many white observers of his time and place, Muir tended to dismiss those who did not conform to his idealized image of what a Native person should be.[148] In their tragedy and through the process of assimilation, his writings suggested, the surviving Native inhabitants of the Sierra Nevada had largely fallen from environmental grace and no longer possessed any special privilege to their ancestral homeland.

Muir may have privately abhorred physical violence against Native Americans and come to sympathize with them, but he chose not to revise his initial impressions in his later published accounts. His vision of wilderness as a place reserved for leisure and rejuvenation away from the stresses of modern life also helped justify the exclusion of surviving Native communities from early national parks.[149] While he never explicitly advocated such practices, in writings published during his years in Martinez, Muir made a point to assure prospective visitors that Native Americans had already all but disappeared from the parks. "The Indians are dead now," he wrote in *Our National Parks* in 1901. "Arrows, bullets, scalping-knives, no longer be feared; and all the wilderness is peacefully open."[150] The few who still lived, he added, had been "civilized into useless innocence" to the point that they no longer resembled their ancestors of the Western past.[151] Such comments perpetuated what historians have called "the myth of the vanishing Native."[152] They denied surviving Native communities a legitimate claim to park lands and facilitated the reinvention of their homelands into spiritual homes for mostly white affluent tourists.

Additionally, while there is no clear evidence that Muir held overtly racist views comparable to those of Madison Grant and Joseph LeConte, he shared with them an implicit view that preserving nature could bring reprieve from aspects of humanity they found disagreeable. Muir's belief in the universal truth of his environmental message may have blinded him to its potential to alienate. In his writings, he was often quicker to criticize than to try to understand those who did not seem to share his particular view of a proper relationship with the natural world. His negative impressions of Native Americans during his early visits to the Sierra Nevada and failure to reflect on their marginalization in conservation had particularly serious ramifications for the subsequent development of environmental politics in the United States. The failure of preservationists after Muir to critically examine his vision further precluded opportunities to forge meaningful links with Native

[145] Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 54.

[146] Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[147] John Muir Global Network, "John Muir and Native Americans."

[148] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 80.

[149] See especially Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

[150] John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1901), 15.

[151] Ibid., 28.

[152] The concept has also been variously described as the "Myth of the Vanishing Indian," "American," or "Race." See, for example, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *'All the Real Indians Died Off' and 20 Other Myths about Native Americans* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), ch. 1; Brewton Berry, "The Myth of the Vanishing Indian," *Phylon* 21, No. 1 (1960): 51-57; Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

communities seeking justice, self-determination, and restoration of ancestral lands, and to confront other forms of environmental injustice.

The Strentzel-Muir Ranch provides valuable opportunities for reflection on these and other aspects of his life and legacy. As the center of Muir's social and domestic life during the period of his greatest influence, the property became a critical platform in the evolution and dissemination of his distinct philosophy of nature and society. The physical and psychological toll of his years as ranch manager affirmed his view of the recuperative qualities of wilderness and informed his perception of the mountains as a spiritual and intellectual home. His marriage to Louie Strentzel and management of the family's estate also gave him the financial security necessary to devote himself to writing, travel, and conservation advocacy. Opportunities to travel to Alaska and around the world widened his mental horizons, exposing him to diverse landscapes, people, and ideas. His increased social standing and access to prominent scientists, writers, reformers, and political figures during his years in Martinez further shaped his thinking on the social, political, and environmental issues of the time, while also granting him broad social and political influence.

Finally, the property offers unique opportunities to explore tensions and linkages between Muir's passionate advocacy for wild places and his role as a husband, father, and successful agriculturalist. While his writings reflect antipathy to modern life and a desire to retreat to non-human wilderness, Muir welcomed social interaction and embraced the responsibilities of a family breadwinner. He also made efforts to bring nature into his home life for his own sake and out of consideration for the well-being of his family. This is reflected in the physical makeup of the property which consisted of orchards and other spaces devoted to economic production, as well areas like Mount Wanda where John, Louie, and their daughters could enjoy an uncultivated natural environment. Muir also maintained cultural landscape features that were meaningful to the Strentzels, including specimen trees that still grow around the property; as well as plantings like the giant sequoia that represent his attachment to wild places beyond the ranch. Muir's efforts to navigate his varied roles, values, and responsibilities at his orchard home speak to core conflicts in his environmental vision and in the movements he inspired.

Comparable Properties

The only other existing NHL designated for its association with John Muir is Fountain Lake Farm, the site of his boyhood home in Marquette County, Wisconsin. Designated in 1989, the property contains eighty acres of mixed prairie and forest that comprised a portion of the farm where Muir lived from 1849 to 1856 and periodically from 1862 to 1864. The farm is identified as significant under NHL Criterion 2 as "the birthplace of [Muir's] interest in wilderness preservation."[153] Muir's explorations of the landscape in his youth contributed to his lifelong appreciation for nature. The site also includes a forty-acre meadow that he attempted to purchase on at least three occasions after the family sold the farm in 1864. The meadow is considered the first place he sought to preserve in its natural state.

The Strentzel-Muir Ranch in Martinez is distinguished from Fountain Lake Farm as Muir's home during the period of his greatest national influence and by its direct association with multiple important events in the history of American conservation. Muir's family life, social relationships, and work in the Alhambra Valley influenced the continuing development of his distinctive environmental philosophy later in his life. They also provided him with the financial security and social standing necessary to support his conservation advocacy. The Italianate mansion that remains on the property is also where he produced his most influential writings.

[153] National Park Service, "Fountain Lake Farm," National Historic Landmark Nomination, May 11, 1989.

Yosemite National Park is the location most closely comparable to the Strentzel-Muir Ranch in terms of association with important events and the life of John Muir. Yosemite is associated with watershed events in conservation as the first public park created by a federal grant for the purposes of preservation and recreation, and as the scene of the battle over the fate of Hetch Hetchy Valley. Yosemite was also important to President Theodore Roosevelt's conservation agenda. John Muir's long period of association with Yosemite beginning in 1868 and lasting through the remainder of his life profoundly influenced his environmental philosophy. Yosemite was the subject of much of his best-known writing and the site of many of his defining accomplishments in conservation.[154] Yosemite National Park can be considered complementary to the Strentzel-Muir Ranch in its national significance. While the park served as a "training ground" for Muir's career in conservation, his family home in Martinez better reveals the domestic and social context for his emergence as a major figure in the movement. It also represents a fuller picture of his involvement in conservation beyond Yosemite, further demonstrating his influence on a national scale.

Numerous places throughout the West and Alaska are also named for Muir. Notable examples include Muir Woods National Monument in Marin County, California (named in 1907); the John Muir Trail (named in 1916) which follows the crest of the High Sierra between Mount Whitney and Yosemite National Park; Camp Muir on Mount Rainier (named in 1916); and the John Muir Wilderness (established in 1964) which encompasses the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada from Mount Whitney to the Mammoth Lakes region. Natural features named for Muir include Mount Muir in Kings Canyon National Park and Muir Glacier in Glacier Bay. While many of these places were important in Muir's life, the names are primarily honorary. The sites are not associated with his life and legacy to a degree that would make them comparable in significance to the Strentzel-Muir Ranch. Resources such as the John Muir Trail may be nationally significant for reasons other than association with Muir. Camp Muir on Mount Rainier was listed in the National Register in 1991 and identified as a contributing resource to the Mount Rainier NHL District in 1997 in recognition of its early rustic structures but not for its association with Muir.

Designated as an NHL in 1987, the LeConte Memorial Lodge in Yosemite, now known as the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center, is another nationally significant property associated with early conservation efforts in California. Sierra Club members constructed the rough stone and timber lodge in 1903 as a memorial to University of California geologist Joseph LeConte, one of the club's founding members. In 2015, the Sierra Club requested that the name be changed to disassociate the building from LeConte whose white supremacist views the club deemed "inconsistent with our fundamental values of equality and justice today."[155] The building's historic name is retained in the NHL documentation but in 2016 the common name was changed to the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center to better reflect its purpose as a welcoming educational and inspirational space for diverse visitors. The property is identified as nationally significant for its association with the early mission of the Sierra Club and is recognized as a unique example of Tudor Revival architecture located in a national park. The building combines European elements with the use of natural materials, reflecting the environmental and design sensibilities characteristic of trends in San Francisco Bay Area architecture.[156] The building is not directly associated with the life of John Muir. It also post-dates many of the nationally significant events represented at the John Muir Home including the designation of Yosemite National Park in 1890 and the founding of the Sierra Club in 1892.

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[154] Snell, et al., *Conservation of Natural Resources*, 221.

[155] Aaron Mair, Sierra Club Board President, and Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director to Jonathan Jarvis, Director National Park Service, and Stephanie Toothman, Keeper of the National Register and Associate Director for Cultural Resources, October 28, 2015.
https://content.sierraclub.org/grassrootsnetwork/sites/content.sierraclub.org.activistnetwork/files/teams/documents/LeConte%20Memorial%20Lodge%20name%20change%20request%20to%20NPS%20102815.pdf.

[156] National Park Service, "LeConte Memorial Lodge," National Historic Landmark Nomination, May 28, 1987.

Homes of other conservationists who are comparable in significance to Muir have also been designated as NHLs. The George Perkins Marsh Boyhood Home in Woodstock, Vermont was designated in 1967 for its association with the life of the author of *Man and Nature* (1864), the book that stimulated a broader national interest in conservation. The house is now the centerpiece of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. United States Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot's Milford, Pennsylvania estate, known as Grey Towers, received NHL designation in 1966 and is now part of Grey Towers National Historic Site. NHLs associated with conservationists whose contributions post-dated Muir's involvement in the movement include the Aldo Leopold Shack and Farm located in rural Sauk County, Wisconsin; the Maryland home where author Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* (1964), the book credited with launching the modern environmental movement; the home of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, who championed conservation of the Florida Everglades; and the Murie Ranch Historic District in Grant Teton National Park, associated with the influential Murie family of naturalists. The Strentzel-Muir Ranch is distinguished from these NHLs as the property most closely associated with John Muir's life and singular contributions to American conservation.

Property Development History

Prior to 1874: Settlement and Agriculture

The lands that comprise the John Muir Home are part of the traditional territory of the Karkin who have historically inhabited the region encompassing the Carquinez Strait. The Karkin are one of several Ohlone/Costanoan-speaking communities indigenous to the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas.[157] Long before the Spanish incursions into California in the late eighteenth century, these groups coexisted with a bountiful and watery landscape around the bay. This was a time when herds of wild animals roamed valleys and hillsides; thousands of waterfowl hid amongst marshes and wetlands; and countless fish and shellfish harbored in rivers and bays. The Karkin and other Ohlone groups relied on the land for food, shelter, and clothing.[158]

The Spanish missions and their associated settlements nearly ended the Ohlone way of life in the San Francisco Bay region. While some adapted to the structure of Spanish colonial society through religious conversion and assimilation, others succumbed to disease, displacement, and punitive actions by colonial authorities. Many were forced into bondage as laborers in the mission ranches, cultivating vines and fruits and tending livestock. The mission system collapsed in 1834 when Mexico gained independence from Spain. The remaining Ohlone were left to survive as best they could, without access to essential resources and with much of their territory transformed into ranchland.

By the 1830s, the old mission ranches were folded into even larger land grants awarded to prominent Mexican citizens and military personnel. One such grant, called the Rancho El Pinole, was held by Don Ignacio Martinez for whom the City of Martinez is named. By the mid-1800s, his ranch encompassed over 17,000 acres.[159] When

[157] Recent research suggests that the multiple variations on Costanoan language are part of a "single dialect chain" divided into two main groups, Northern and Southern, and with Karkin identified as a distinct variation. See Randall Milliken, Laurence H. Shoup, and Beverly R. Ortiz, "Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today," Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Oakland, CA, prepared for National Park Service, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco, CA, June 2009: 30-39.

[158] Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1978), 1-2.

[159] Edgar A. Vovsi, "Establishment of the Rancho El Pinole" (Pinole, CA: Pinole Chamber of Commerce, 1968), 24-26; Thomas Elizabeth Akers, "Mexican Ranchos in the Vicinity of Mission San Jose" (master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1931), 6; Carmel G. Martinez, "The Presidios of California Under Four Flags: Life and Times of a Spanish Officer in California,

Don Ignacio died in 1848, the massive ranch was divided. His son, Vicente, inherited a 1,660-acre parcel on the eastern end of the ranch. Here among hilly grasslands and woodlands and fertile valleys, Martinez grazed cattle and raised crops, and in 1849 constructed the two-story Martinez Adobe between a small creek (later named Franklin Creek) and the road leading to the town named after his father.[160]

An influx of population following the discovery of gold in northern California led to further division of the Mexican land grants. Shortly after California's admission as a state in 1850, Martinez mortgaged the adobe and the surrounding lands to Edward Franklin, an American settler for whom Franklin Creek and Franklin Canyon are named. From this point on, the property was further subdivided with portions sold multiple times. One such purchaser was Polish-born physician John Strentzel who with his wife Louisiana, one-year-old son John Erwin, and two-year-old daughter Louisa (Louie) had made their way from Texas to California by covered wagon in 1849. In 1853, the family settled in what was then known as Cañada del Hambre (Valley of Hunger) near present day Martinez where Dr. Strentzel endeavored to start a fruit ranch. Disliking the name (given after a group of Spanish soldiers had nearly died of starvation there), Louisiana renamed the valley "Alhambra" after the ornate Moorish palace of that name in Spain.[161] In July of 1853, soon after acquiring the original twenty-acre parcel, Dr. Strenztel acquired an additional twelve acres along Alhambra Creek, a portion of which served as the family gravesite after the death of their only son John in 1857. The Strentzels also later reinterred their younger daughter Lottie, who was born in California but died before the family moved to the Alhambra Valley. It is not known whether grave markers were erected at that time.[162]

The Gold Rush and subsequent annexation of California to the United States also initiated a brutal genocide of the surviving Ohlone and other Native populations throughout California. Facing rampant racial discrimination, enslavement, and legally sanctioned vigilante killings, Native communities were forced to adapt again to survive. Many Karkin and other former Mission Indians in the San Francisco Bay area concealed their identities, further contributing to the decline of spiritual and cultural traditions and loss of knowledge that had begun with Spanish colonization. Their descendants nevertheless persisted, retaining core values and a sense of identity connected to their ancestral lands, including the lands that comprise the current Strentzel-Muir Ranch property. Today, many members of the seven Tribes directly enslaved at Mission San Jose in Freemont, California, and Mission Dolores in San Francisco—including the Karkin—form the Confederated Villages of Lisjan. These groups continue to preserve cultural traditions and language and are leading efforts for the protection and return of ancestral lands in the east bay area.[163]

1874-1890: The Strentzel Ranch and John Muir

The development of Martinez as a shipping port during and after the Gold Rush also opened up new opportunities for commercial agriculture. During his early years on the ranch, Dr. Strentzel experimented with many imported and native fruits and vines to learn which varieties would grow best. One of his first plantings was a pear orchard near the family gravesite on Alhambra Creek. The root stock of the orchard still exists today,

1799-1848—Don Ignacio Martinez," Manuscript ca.1900; typed copy ca.1987, 322. BANC MSS 88/24, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Kathryn Burns Plummer, "Don Ignacio Martinez," *Contra Costa Chronicles* 1, no. 1 (1965): 12-13.

[160] Steve M. Burke, Diane L. Rhodes, Kevin L. Baumgard, Mark L. Tabor, and Charles R. Svoboda, *Historic Structures Report, Martinez Adobe, John Muir National Historic Site* (US Department of Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, August 1992), 151.

[161] Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 279.

[162] Ibid., 16; No Author, "The Biography of John T. Strentzel," undated typescript, 15, Folder "Strentzel Family Information," JOMU.

[163] Confederated Villages of Lisjan, "Tribal History," https://villagesoflisjan.org/home/tribal-history/.

making it the one of the oldest surviving commercial orchards in northern California.[164]

Strentzel acquired additional lands in the following years and, in addition to the pears, produced apples, cherries, figs, olives, oranges, peaches, pecans, plums, quinces, and walnuts. The ranch grew vegetables and hay, raised cattle and hogs, and produced California's first Muscat grapes and raisins. Strentzel helped establish a new wharf at Martinez from which produce was shipped to local and eastern markets. In the gentlemen farmer tradition, Strentzel promoted the benefits of fruit growing to his fellow farmers and often gave away cuttings and advice to get them started.[165]

In 1874, Dr. Strentzel added the Martinez Adobe and a 244-acre parcel known as Redfern Place to his holdings.[166] That same year, the Strentzels met John Muir at the Oakland home of J.B. McChesney where Muir had been staying. Muir developed a close friendship with the Strentzels, and John and Louie corresponded frequently during his travels. In 1880, the couple married and moved in with the Strentzels in their first Alhambra house, located near the existing Strentzel-Muir gravesite.[167]

Dr. Strentzel constructed his second home in the south portion of Redfern Place in 1882. Situated on a knoll east of Franklin Creek, the two-story, Italianate house featured fourteen rooms, porches, an attic, and a cupola offering sweeping views of the Alhambra Valley. The house was accessed by a curving carriage drive-loop and surrounded by walkways and masses of shrubs and trees.[168]

When completed, the house was painted light gray with dark gray or black trim.[169] The Strentzels moved in by late 1882 or early 1883, fulfilling their promise of passing the Alhambra ranch house to Louie and John. The Strentzel House quickly became a center for social activities. Frequent visitors were John, Louie, baby Wanda, and Muir's sisters, Sarah and Margaret.[170] Communication was further improved by 1884 when telephone service was brought to the house.

Muir took over the responsibility of running the fruit ranch in 1881, and soon began focusing less on experimental fruits and vines and more on proven varieties, such as Bartlett pears and late season table grapes, that commanded the highest market prices.[171] He also entered into financial partnership with Dr. Strentzel, buying, selling, and leasing lands throughout the valley and beyond.

Much of Muir's early work on the ranch was devoted to "seizing control over the land" as historian David

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[164] No Author, "Draft Feasibility Study, John Muir Gravesite," (1980), 2, JOMU.

[165] National Park Service, "General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment," 1991: 36; Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: The Historic Context of Fruit Trees and Orchards in the National Park System* (National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, Pacific West Regional Office – Cultural Resources, Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, 2009), 160-161.

[166] Burke et al., *Historic Structures Report*, 24.

[167] The approximate location of the original Alhambra ranch house which burned down in the 1990s is identified on the map in Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 52.

[168] The local newspaper closely monitored the construction of the Strentzel House. An update from July 1882 offered glowing descriptions of the new residence and ranch: "Dr. Strentzel intends to have erected a handsome and costly residence on that portion of his farm known as the old Redfern ranch. A large part of the tract, which is beautifully situated, is covered with a young and flourishing orchard and vineyard, and within a few years it will be one of the most attractive places in the country." *Contra Costa Gazette*, July 1, 1882.

[169] Architectural Resources Group, "Paint Analysis for John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez, California," Architectural Resources Group, Sacramento, 1999, JOMU.

[170] Louisiana Erwin Strentzel, diary entry, December 24, 188? (year unclear), JOMU.

[171] Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 230.

Hickman writes.[172] One of his first projects was to open the two flood prone creeks which ran through the property. To prevent the creeks from backing up and overflowing their banks during heavy rains, he cut back trees and shrubs lining the banks and set fire to the underbrush. Muir also planted buckeye to fortify stream banks upstream, as well as eucalyptus, cedar, and other larger non-native trees as a firewood supply and to provide shade for livestock. He employed Chinese laborers in clearing the land, expanding and improving irrigation ditches, and planting and pruning the orchards. His efforts to open the landscape created wider views from the house, to the pleasure of his mother-in-law.

In 1885, Dr. Strentzel acquired the two hills that Muir later named after his daughters Wanda and Helen, bringing the ranch's total land area to over 2,300 acres. Although more lands were brought into fruit and vine production, Muir chose to leave the upper slopes of Mount Wanda uncultivated and free of grazing. Pears and olives were grown on the lower slopes while the higher hills were a favorite place for family walks. By the 1890s, Mount Wanda remained characterized by open areas of grassland interspersed with buckeye (*Aesculus California*), California laurel, and oak (*Quercus spp.*)

The Martinez Adobe served as ranch headquarters during Muir's time and was where workers gathered each morning to receive their daily assignments. A complex of barns, packing sheds, corrals, and living quarters surrounded the building.[173] A row of shelters southeast of the adobe along Franklin Creek housed migrant workers. At least one was reserved for Chinese laborers.[174] According to a letter from Wanda Muir, a kitchen fire burned the "China House" to the ground in the summer of 1896. The workers were in the pear orchard when the blaze started and despite rushing back, were unable to save anything but some bags of rice and a few other items.[175] While no structures or artifacts directly associated with Chinese migrant labor have been identified on the Muir property, future subsurface archeological survey may yield additional information.

A network of farm roads connected the various fields to the Strentzel House and adobe, while Franklin Canyon Road provided direct access to the shipping facilities at the Martinez wharf. Other landscape features included wells, windmills, cisterns, a woodshed, and a fishpond at the base of the knoll. The lush rows of fruits and vines were complemented by plantings and windbreaks around the Strentzel House, many of which still survive today.

In 1886, the Muirs' second daughter Helen was born but suffered from poor health as a child. By the late 1880s, John's worries about Helen and the years of labor and toil in the fields were beginning to affect his health. Aware of her husband's love of the wilderness, Louie convinced him to begin writing and traveling again.[176] To help fund this venture, the couple began to sell and lease much of the ranch lands. Muir was able to save enough money to retire from agriculture at the age of fifty-one and pursue writing and traveling for the balance of his life.[177]

With Dr. Strentzel's death in late 1890, the estate passed to his wife and daughter. Muir assumed the responsibility of administering the estate. At the time of probate, the doctor's holdings included 450 acres in

[172] Hickman, "Muir's Orchard Home," 346.
[173] Burke et al., *Historic Structures Report*, 27; Hussey et al., "Feasibility Report," 24.
[174] Killian and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 73; Worster, *Passion for Nature*, 292.
[175] [Annie] Wanda Muir to [John Muir], 1896 Aug 11. Reel 09, Image 0370, JMP. Wanda described the fire as such: "I could not have believed that so small a building could make such a tremendous fire, and then to add to the general noise and confusion their guns and cartridges went off and made an awful racket but nobody was hurt and it did make a most beautiful, beautiful blaze."
[176] Bonnie Johanna Gisel, ed., *Kindred and Related Spirits: The Letters of John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001), 273.
[177] Hussey et al., "Feasibility Report," 8.

Rancho el Pinole, 1,400 acres in the Rancho Cañada del Hambre, and 240 acres in the Rancho Las Juntas. These lands—along with cattle, horses, and farm implements; property in Valona, Martinez, and San Francisco; and shares in the Mount Diablo Mining Company, Bank of Martinez, and the Alhambra Grange—left a considerable fortune of $286,422.92. The Strentzel House and Martinez Adobe were part of a 106-acre area east of the Franklin Canyon Road transferred in two parts to Mrs. Strentzel and Louie on September 17, 1892.[178]

1890-1914: Ranching and Writing

Muir made several modifications to the Strentzel mansion soon after moving in 1890. These changes included converting the first-floor parlor to provide more comfortable living space for Mrs. Strentzel and construction of a three-story addition on the south façade to support a larger capacity water tank in the attic. Muir also established his writing room in the northwest upstairs bedroom where it was brighter and somewhat removed from the noise of the household.[179]

From 1890 until Muir's death in 1914, crops produced at the ranch remained similar to those of previous years, with the main change being Muir's concentration on more proven and profitable varieties. Improvements to the property during this period included a new windmill and well on the east side of the house, a new road on the south side of the knoll, and construction of a carriage house. Although increasingly immersed in travel and writing, Muir maintained his connection to the ranch through letters and occasional work in the fields when he was in between projects and trips.[180]

Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, more trees, shrubs, and flowers were planted around the Strentzel-Muir House, creating a lush and beautiful scene that included a variety of palms, cedar trees, eucalyptus, and a vegetable garden. Planting was a family affair enjoyed by all and was not confined to the house area. Fruit trees and roses were also planted at the Martinez Adobe and flowers and shrubs adorned the family gravesite. Muir also oversaw the planting of elderberry (*Sambucus Mexicana*) and willow trees (*Salix lasiandra*) to stabilize the creek bank near the gravestones, while Chinese ranch workers tended the grass that grew around the graves. Pears continued to grow at the gravesite, although active maintenance of the orchard ceased sometime during this period.[181]

The start of the new century was a turning point for both the fruit ranch and the Muir family. John's selling of a right-of-way for a new railroad viaduct and tunnel south of the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe in 1897 was an indicator of dramatic economic, technological, and demographic changes sweeping through the Alhambra Valley. For Muir, this time brought influential meetings with American presidents, favorable reviews of his book *Our National Parks* (1901), the beginning of a prolific writing period, and the start of his most famous and frustrating conservation battle: the debate over the proposed damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park.

With Louie Muir's death in 1905, her shares of the Strentzel-Muir Ranch passed to her daughters. Soon after, John traveled to northern Arizona where, at the time of Louie's diagnosis, he had been staying with Helen while she recovered from illness. There he obtained a piece of petrified wood which he set in the mantle of the second-floor fireplace built after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 caused the fireplaces and chimneys in the Strentzel-Muir House to partially collapse. Muir used the opportunity to make other changes, which

[178] Ibid., 8.
[179] Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, 27.
[180] Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 336.
[181] Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 133.

included construction of a massive Spanish-style fireplace in the east parlor (Mrs. Strentzel's old room) where he could build a "real mountain campfire."[182]

Also in 1906, Wanda married Tom Hanna, a fellow student from University of California-Berkeley, and the couple began remodeling the Martinez Adobe for use as their first home. Tom Hanna also assumed the responsibilities of managing the ranch. Meanwhile, Muir traveled extensively throughout the United States and the world. At one point he was away for over a year. The plantings around the Strentzel-Muir House were meticulously maintained by ranch laborers and continued to thrive, so much so that some of the larger conifers had to be removed because of overcrowding.

In 1912, Muir returned home to write and spend time with Wanda and her family at the adobe. The battle for Hetch Hetchy also continued but was lost in 1913 with the passage of the Raker Act. In 1914, in an effort to convince his daughters to return to the house, Muir added new carpets, paint, and even electric lighting. Soon after writing a letter to Helen outlining the improvements, Muir packed his typed manuscript, *Travels in Alaska*, and went to see her at her home in the Mojave Desert town of Daggett. On the train ride there he caught a cold, which quickly turned to pneumonia, and in Los Angeles on Christmas Eve he died at the age of seventy-six. John was buried next to Louie at the family gravesite on the bank of Alhambra Creek. His funeral service was held under the spreading branches of a eucalyptus tree he had once admired, and which is still present at the site.[183]

1915-Present: Subdivision and Preservation

The remaining lands of the Strentzel-Muir Ranch passed to Wanda and Helen following their father's death. When the estate was subdivided, the Hannas assumed ownership of the gravesite and most of the ranch lands. Tom Hanna reintroduced grazing to Mount Wanda, adding fences, corrals, and water troughs, although the exact locations of the installations are not known. The house and 4.83 acres of surrounding land stayed in the family until 1919 when it was sold to the Irish family. The Martinez Adobe and about forty acres of surrounding land were sold to the Pond family in 1915. A period of complicated property transfers followed until 1921 when ownership finally stabilized.

Soon after Muir's death, heavy industry arrived in Martinez, bringing increased population. Land once filled with orchards proved more valuable when occupied with houses, especially in the northern part of the Alhambra Valley near the town. Residential development gradually pushed south toward the Strentzel-Muir property. Existing roads were improved, and new roads were constructed. One of the new roads passed just south of the Strentzel-Muir House and would later become the six-lane State Route 4. The Strentzel-Muir Gravesite was gradually surrounded by suburban development. Although the Hannas retained ownership of the 1.27-acre parcel, it became cut off from the rest of the historic Muir property. Mount Wanda remained mostly undeveloped, with only remnant orchards present by the 1960s. Stock ponds and other remnant grazing structures present on the slopes today likely date to this period.[184]

From 1921 to 1955, the Martinez Adobe was owned by Daniel Parsowith, a tailor, who added new walkways, walls, driveways, and patios, and landscaped with shrubs and flowers. The front of the adobe was heavily shaded for most of this period by black locust trees. Some outbuildings associated with the Strentzel-Muir

[182] National Park Service, "Final General Management Plan: John Muir National Historic Site," Denver: US Department of Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, September 1976, 6; Hussey, "Feasibility Report," 25.
[183] "John Muir, Aged Naturalist, Dead," *New York Times*, December 25, 1914.
[184] Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 183-184.

Ranch were retained while others were removed, and former vineyards and orchards were maintained and even expanded.

Across the creek, the new owners of the Strentzel-Muir House, the Curry family, thinned out some of the understory plantings and generally kept the grounds in order. When Mr. Curry died, the house and landscape took on a neglected appearance until it was rented to the Kreiss family, who eventually purchased the property in 1937. The Kreisses made repairs, relocated the carriage house to the east side of the house, removed the woodshed and dilapidated Franklin Creek windmill, and planted a rose garden in the oval of the loop driveway. Early preservation efforts of the Strentzel-Muir House were made between the fall of 1954 and spring of 1955 by David and Virginia Loveless, a couple, who along with their two young children, were allowed by the owner to live in the house in exchange for their efforts in its protection.

In 1955, the Stein family purchased the Martinez Adobe property, which had been subdivided into a 3.8-acre parcel by this time, and the Sax family purchased the Strenztel-Muir House property. Both owners fixed up their properties and opened them to the public on a limited basis. Concurrent with this activity was a growing interest in memorializing John Muir, fueled in part by the rapidly advancing march of the suburbs. Both Sax and Stein expressed their support of such an effort.

The Sierra Club had been hosting commemorations of Muir through occasional ceremonies at the gravesite for a number of years, and many members assumed that a memorial to Muir would be erected there. However, others had long viewed the house itself as a prize. Beginning in 1952, club members unsuccessfully lobbied the State of California to purchase the house as part of the state park system. When Sax acquired the Muir property and expressed his interest in a memorial, interest in preserving the house increased. In 1958, a proposal to include both the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe in a county park was announced, but it too failed.

By 1960, preservation and commemoration efforts focused on federal acquisition and administration. The following year, Stein purchased the small vineyard/orchard between the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe to prevent the owner of that parcel from developing the land and severing the connection between the last remaining buildings associated with the Strentzel-Muir Ranch. In 1962 and 1963, Representative John Baldwin of California introduced a bill for the creation of the John Muir National Historic Site, which included the Strentzel-Muir House and the Martinez Adobe parcels, but not the small orchard property. On both occasions, a decision was delayed pending the completion of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings and a Feasibility Study. The latter report included the vineyard parcel and urged immediate federal acquisition before the area was compromised by new developments and upgrades of the adjacent highway. While still under private ownership, the Strentzel-Muir House, Martinez Adobe, and intervening lands were together listed as a National Historic Landmark on December 29, 1962.

On August 31, 1964, the John Muir National Historic Site was authorized “as a public national memorial to John Muir in recognition of his efforts as a conservationist and a crusader for national parks and reservations.”[185] The site included the Strentzel-Muir House, Martinez Adobe, and the small vineyard/orchard parcel, which together comprised just under nine acres of the original 2,300-acre ranch. The establishment of the park at this time was fortunate, as most of the land surrounding the park was developed, or soon to be developed, with homes, businesses, and roads.

Many of the proposals introduced in the Feasibility Study were expanded in the park’s 1965 Master Plan. The report identified basic management and interpretive strategies aimed at conveying the appearance and feeling of

[185] National Park Service, “General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment,” Appendix 1.

the ranch during Muir's period of residence. Among the proposals were to restore the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe to the 1906-1914 period and, through a historic planting plan completed in 1969, to establish orchards, vineyards, and other plantings to represent the historic scene as it may have appeared during Muir's time. Other major goals at this time included relocating the carriage house to its historic location and reconstructing the Franklin Creek windmill.

The NPS established many of the current visitor facilities, such as the visitor center, parking area, and circulation system, in the early years of the park. Subsequent planning studies proposed expansion of these facilities, but to date none have been implemented. However, many of the park's interpretive goals aimed at restoring the historic ranch setting were accomplished, including interior and exterior restoration of the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe, relocation and partial reconstruction of the carriage house, and installation of a replica of the Franklin Creek windmill. Other changes at the park came about in response to external needs and concerns, such as flood abatement and weed removal projects along Franklin Creek to reduce downstream flooding and installation of buffer plantings to protect the park's historic setting.

By the 1970s, NPS began exploring the possibility of acquiring and preserving the Strentzel-Muir Gravesite, and in 1980 a feasibility study was completed for that purpose. NPS also began considering acquisition of Mount Wanda as another addition to the park. These sites were envisioned as locations to provide a fuller interpretation of Muir's home life and work. NPS acquired the Mount Wanda parcels in 1991 and 1992, while acquisition of the gravesite was not completed until 2000. In response to concerns from neighboring property owners, the park took a low-key approach to management at the gravesite, which included keeping it off limits to non-guided visitors. In 2002, NPS constructed a maintenance facility on NPS-owned lands off Franklin Canyon Road on the north side of Mount Wanda. The park also completed repairs to the Mount Wanda fire road and developed a trail system that linked the unit to a regional trail network extending to Briones Regional Park to the south and the Martinez shoreline to the north. Two additional major park efforts are occurring at the time of this writing (2022): the first is the opening of the gravesite to non-guided public access after several years of planning and consultation with local landowners; the second is NPS's acquisition of a forty-four-acre parcel on the south side of Mount Wanda, known as West Hill Farm, which was owned by the Swett family during the period of Muir's residence.

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private:	Building(s):
Public-Local:	District: X
Public-State:	Site:
Public-Federal: X	Structure:
	Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings: 3	Buildings: 7
Sites: 3	Sites:
Structures: 1	Structures: 25
Objects:	Objects: 1
Total: 7	Total: 33

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY

The Strentzel-Muir Ranch is located within the Alhambra Valley, formed by the Alhambra Creek and Franklin Creek watersheds, in the City of Martinez, California. The property is approximately 2.5 miles from the Carquinez Strait between the Suisun and San Pablo Bays, where the Martinez wharf historically provided a shipping point for the products of the Strentzel-Muir Ranch. The district encompasses 336.42 acres of the formerly 2,300-acre ranch. All the land included in the National Historic Landmark (NHL) is currently under National Park Service (NPS) ownership.

The district is comprised of three discontiguous contributing sites sharing nearly the same boundaries as the three units of John Muir National Historic Site. Two areas of the Mount Wanda unit are excluded from the NHL: a forty-four-acre parcel known as West Hill Farm which is expected (as of 2022) to be added to the park but which was never part of the Strentzel-Muir property; and six small contiguous parcels (two privately owned, three city-owned, and one NPS-owned) at the northeast corner of the unit. While these parcels were part of the historic Strentzel-Muir property, their dominant features post-date the period of significance and they lack the high level of integrity necessary for inclusion in the NHL. Non-historic features in these parcels include the park maintenance facility constructed in 2002, a row of walnut trees likely dating to the 1930s, a segment of the California Riding and Hiking Trail, a segment of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail corridor including a section of viaduct, the Mount Wanda parking lot, and the non-historic Mount Wanda fire road. Four of the six parcels are also separated from the rest of Mount Wanda by the BNSF rail corridor.

The 8.9-acre House Site contains the only contributing buildings in the district. These are the Italianate Strentzel-Muir House, built in 1882 and occupied by John Muir, Louie Strentzel Muir, and their daughters Wanda and Helen beginning in 1890; the Martinez Adobe, built in 1849 and purchased by Dr. Strentzel in 1874; and a Carriage House which was moved after the period of significance then returned to its historic location in 1983. The buildings are connected by a network of farm roads, driveways, and walkways which together constitute a contributing structure. The site is further defined by various landscape features including the knoll

that the mansion sits on, Franklin Creek which separates the eastern and western sections of the site, and historic plantings. Orchards and vineyards at the site replicate varieties from Muir's time but are not historic. The Mount Wanda Site consists of 326.25 acres of oak woodland and grass-covered hillsides separated from the House Site by California State Route 4, Franklin Canyon Road, and the BNSF rail corridor. The 1.27-acre Strentzel-Muir Gravesite is located approximately one mile south of the House Site in a residential neighborhood east of Alhambra Valley Road. The site is on the west bank of Alhambra Creek, approximately 500' from the southeast Mount Wanda Site boundary. Mount Wanda and the Strentzel-Muir Gravesite contain remnant orchards dating to the period of significance.

Integrity Evaluation

The Strentzel-Muir Ranch retains a high degree of integrity, particularly of location, materials, workmanship, and association. Integrity of setting, design, and feeling is diminished somewhat due to the subdivision and development of the Alhambra Valley since the period of significance but is retained at a high level within the NHL district boundaries. The property's overall integrity is preserved at a high level.

Contributing resources and associated landscape features remain in their historic locations. These include the Strentzel-Muir House, the Martinez Adobe, the Carriage House, farm roads and paths, the Strentzel and Muir family gravestones, historic plantings, and remnant orchards.

Integrity of setting beyond the boundaries of the NHL is diminished by changes to the Alhambra Valley landscape since the historic period. Suburban residential and commercial development has replaced most of the agricultural lands that comprised the Strentzel-Muir Ranch and neighboring properties during Muir's time. Modern roads—especially California State Route 4 which passes to the south of the House Site, separating it from Mount Wanda—intrude visually and audibly on the NHL. Boundary plantings added to screen non-historic, incompatible adjacent land uses at the House Site lessen some visual impacts but also interrupt the formerly open views of the surrounding landscape. The Strentzel-Muir Gravesite is currently enclosed within a non-historic residential neighborhood, while views from the upper slopes of Mount Wanda include industrial sites along the Carquinez Strait which were not present historically.

The immediate setting within the NHL boundary is intact. At the House Site, integrity of setting is retained in its topography, characterized by the 30'-high knoll on which the Strentzel-Muir House sits and Franklin Creek to the west. Historic character is further retained in historic plantings surrounding the Strentzel-Muir House. These include a row of incense cedar trees (*Calocedrus decurrens*) to the west, the two California fan palms (*Washingtonia filafera*) framing the front entrance, and the giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) growing at the junction of the Main Farm Road, Carriage Drive Loop, and Woodshed Road. Remaining specimen trees are substantially larger and taller than they were during the historic period. Some have grown to the extent that they block views from the Strentzel-Muir House cupola. However, the maturation of the trees also reflects the passage of time and does not substantially detract from the historic setting. Additionally, while the existing orchards and vineyards are non-historic, they replicate varieties present during the period of significance and are compatible with the historic scene.

The setting of Mount Wanda is also comparably well preserved. The oak woodland and grassland landscape exists much as it did during the historic period. The upper slopes continue to provide expansive views of the Alhambra Valley. This includes views of the undeveloped hills to the south and west and Mount Diablo to the southeast that are similar to historic views. Although views of suburban development and heavy industry along the strait diminish integrity of setting to some degree, these changes are mainly apparent in the viewsheds to the north and northeast. They also represent continuations of patterns of demographic, economic, and technological

change that were already underway during the period of Muir's residence. Despite being surrounded by a residential neighborhood, the immediate setting of the Strentzel-Muir Gravesite along Alhambra Creek remains peaceful and contemplative. The remnant pear orchard and mature eucalyptus associated with Muir's funeral service further contribute to integrity of setting.

Surviving buildings retain much of their original design schemes and features including materials, proportion, scale, orientation, architectural details, and circulation patterns. The arrangement of rooms and locations of important historic features such as the fireplaces also remain intact in the Strentzel-Muir House. Structural changes to the house made by Muir are also preserved. These include the three-story south wing; and modifications made during repairs after the 1906 earthquake such as the addition of the two fireplaces, archways connecting the first-floor hall with the parlor and dining room, and the passageway from his study to the adjacent bedroom.

While most of the original 2,300-acre Strentzel-Muir Ranch is now obscured by modern development, the historic design of farm roads, driveways, and walkways is preserved on a smaller scale within the House Site. Historic planting patterns are still evident in remnant orchards at the Gravesite and on Mount Wanda. The non-historic orchards and vineyards at the House Site also replicate planting patterns from the period of significance and are compatible with the historic designed landscape.

Integrity of materials is preserved to a high degree in the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe. The Carriage House also retains original materials. While most of the interior finishes and furnishings in the Strentzel-Muir House are not historic, Muir's original writing desk where he produced many of his most influential work is still present in the second-floor scribble den. The original coal burning stove where the family's long-time cook and caregiver Ah Fong prepared meals is retained in the Strentzel-Muir House kitchen. Several other historic furnishings and other items associated with Muir's life and travels are in the park's museum collection. Historic farm roads and walkways are extant but have been resurfaced with new materials. Integrity of materials is retained in historic specimen trees at the House Site and Gravesite. Historic rootstock is also preserved in the remnant orchards at the Gravesite and on Mount Wanda.

Victorian workmanship is evident in the Italianate architectural features of the Strentzel-Muir House including the roof brackets, balcony balustrades, attenuated rectilinear porch columns, window hoods, quoins, and roof cupola. Interior features such as ceiling medallions, moldings and wainscoting, and fireplaces also exemplify historic workmanship, including work credited to Muir. Repairs to the Strentzel-Muir House, Martinez Adobe, and Carriage House since the period of significance have largely maintained the historic appearance and craftsmanship. Workmanship in the landscape is difficult to evaluate due to the loss of most of the orchards and the maturation of historic plantings. Although representing only fragments of the former ranch, the remnant pear orchard at the Gravesite and the olive orchard on Mount Wanda help illustrate horticultural practices during Muir's time.

Integrity of feeling is diminished somewhat due to the subdivision of the Strentzel-Muir property and the development of the surrounding land which have caused some loss of the rural aesthetic of the historic period. Visual and auditory intrusions are especially prevalent at the House Site but are less pronounced on Mount Wanda and at the Gravesite. The grave markers next to Alhambra Creek and the large eucalyptus at the Gravesite still evoke the feeling of a small rural family cemetery. The feeling of Mount Wanda is largely retained from Muir's time. Even with changes in the viewshed, it continues to provide opportunities for quiet solitude and engagement with the natural environment of the Alhambra Valley.

Integrity of association is retained in contributing resources and other historic features that are direct links to Muir's life and work. These include the Strentzel-Muir House, Martinez Adobe, Carriage House, farm roads and walkways, grave markers, and plantings that were present during Muir's period of residence. The writing desk in the scribble den is an important small-scale feature associated with Muir's nationally significant publications. The piece of petrified wood embedded in the upstairs bedroom fireplace evokes Muir's time in Arizona after Louie Muir's death in 1905.

Contributing Resources Description

This section provides descriptions of the NHL district's three contributing buildings, one contributing structure (Muir Farm Roads, Driveways, and Walkways), and three discontiguous contributing sites. All three contributing buildings as well as the historic road, driveway, and walkway network are contained within the contributing House Site.

Contributing Buildings

Strentzel-Muir House

Completed in 1882, the two-story, fourteen-room, Italianate Strentzel-Muir House sits atop a 30'-high knoll overlooking the Alhambra Valley. The house was designed by Wolfe & Son of San Francisco and constructed by Sylvester and Langabee of San Francisco. The knoll slopes steeply away from the east and west elevations and moderately to the north and south. The front of the building faces north, taking advantage of the long views down the Alhambra Valley to the Carquinez Strait. The south façade faces California State Route 4 and the lower northern slopes of Mount Wanda.

The wood frame and brick building is symmetrically arranged around a center hall and measures approximately 38' x 40' with an additional L-shaped rear kitchen wing measuring approximately 19' x 25'. A three-story addition to the south façade constructed by John Muir in 1890 measures approximately 14' x 16'. The addition includes servants' quarters, a music room intended for Muir's daughters Wanda and Helen, and an attic holding a large capacity steel water tank installed by Muir. The house also includes a basement, an enclosed conservatory on the east façade, and five porches. The conservatory and porches extend beyond the building measurements noted above.

The house is clad in redwood siding with matching clapboard siding on the upper levels and brick finishes on the lower walls of the south addition. A hipped roof with a central projecting cupola caps the building. Roof materials include cedar shingles on the primary and rear wings; flat-seam copper roofing on the west porch, conservatory, and original water tank room; and a stainless-steel standing seam roof on the 1890 south addition.

The building's symmetrical plan and ornate front entry façade reflect the formality of late nineteenth-century Victorian society and are consistent with the Italianate style popular among prosperous families in the area at the time of construction. Other Italianate architectural details identified in the 2004 *Historic Structure Report* include "narrow, one-over-one, double hung sash windows with bracketed hoods, fascia boards with scroll-sawn brackets at the eaves, decorative quoins, balustraded porches and balconies, classical columns supporting the porch, and the impressive upper-story cupola" which provides a 360-degree view of the surrounding property, including the north slope of Mount Wanda.[186]

[186] ARG, *Historic Structure Report*, 17. Also refer to National Park Service, "John Muir National Historic Site," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, October 10, 1975.

The basement walls and foundation, as well as the intermediate load bearing columns, are constructed of red fired brick. The concrete slab basement floor (added in 1969) is approximately 4' below finished grade. The three fireplace foundations that extend out from the basement walls are of two types: the northeast corner foundation has a massive opening with a segmented arch, while the two on the southwest wall are complete arches with flues. The flues are possibly associated with the installation of a coal furnace in 1937. One rises from the top of the arch, and the second is to the right of the arch. The basement also includes an interior wall added to accommodate office space in 1986.

The ground floor consists of a central hall with staircase, flanked by two rooms on each side: the parlor and dining room to the east, and the paneled library and second parlor to the west. A door from the library leads to an enclosed porch that opens to the unenclosed west façade porch.[187] Steps from that porch lead to the garden toward the front of the house. A double hung window in the dining room that opens vertically to near door height provides access to the enclosed conservatory on the east side. A small service porch with a staircase is also attached to the east side of the kitchen wing, while a small laundry porch extends from the west side. Prior to Muir's occupancy, an additional access porch led up to the library and into one of the small kitchen side rooms. This was apparently removed as part of Muir's 1890 renovations. A short staircase leads from the kitchen to servants' quarters in the south wing addition. Another narrow stairway leads from the kitchen to the second-floor servants' quarters in the main house. A downstairs bathroom originally located between the dining room and east parlor was removed after the 1906 earthquake, as was the dining room fireplace. These changes made the east and west parlors the same size. The entries to both rooms from the main hall were also enlarged at this time to accommodate French doors.

The second floor consists of five bedrooms (including Muir's scribble den) flanking a central hall, a rear lavatory and hall, servants' quarters, the original water tank room, and a music practice room in the south end addition. During the period of significance, Muir removed closet space from his east bedroom to enlarge the neighboring bedroom. The scribble den is located at the northwest corner of the upper floor, across the hall from his bedroom. The room includes a fireplace finished with imported marble and is furnished with Muir's writing desk. The bedroom used by Louie Muir adjoins the scribble den to the south. It includes a fireplace that Muir rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake. Embedded in the fireplace brickwork is a piece of petrified wood that Muir collected during his survey of Petrified Forest in Arizona after Louie's death. The opening between the two rooms also dates to just after the earthquake.

The house underwent various repairs and modifications between Muir's death in 1914 and NPS acquisition of the property in 1964. Changes immediately following the period of significance are not well documented, although it is known that the exterior brick was painted tan sometime before 1923. The building fell into disrepair after 1930 when the owner Henry J. Curry died. Upon purchasing the property in 1937, Nellie and John Roderick Kreiss began implementing some repairs and updates, including addition of a coal furnace in 1937. Previously, fireplaces were the only source of heat. Known repairs by 1955 when the property was sold to Henry and Faire Sax include replacement of attic window glazing, replacement of window and door screens, removal of wallpaper, interior painting, and replacement of single bulb light fixtures with new ceiling fixtures. The Sax family also undertook repairs with the intention of restoring the building to its appearance in 1900. Work included installation of a gas furnace, repointing of rear foundation walls, exterior painting, realignment of the northwest foundation corner, replacement of missing quoins, roof replacement, and installation of turnbuckle wall supports in the south addition.

[187] The northern section of the west façade porch was partially enclosed and used as a medical office for Dr. Strentzel, although it is unclear to what extent he still practiced. Ketcham, *Historic Furnishings Report*, 15.

With the establishment of John Muir National Historic Site in 1964, the NPS made plans to rehabilitate the building to the period of 1906 to 1914. Later planning documents extended the period of interpretation to encompass the full period of Muir's occupancy of the house beginning in 1890. Projects completed between 1967 and 1969 include repainting, installation of underground utilities, installation of a new red cedar shingle roof and replacement of the tar and gravel conservatory roof with metal roofing, repair and replacement of wood trim, replacement of the laundry porch brick steps with wood steps, and installation of the 4"-thick concrete slab basement floor. Work completed since the 1970s includes exterior and interior repainting, seismic upgrades, addition of a new electrical system, installation of a chair lift on the east side, addition of a basement wall to accommodate new office space, hanging of new wallpaper based on the original design, plaster and molding repair, sanding and graining of wood floors, replacement of underground drains, roof replacement, replacement of gutters and downspouts, installation of UV film on first and second floor windows, addition of support piers to the west porch due to slope movement, installation of a fire sprinkler system, and rehabilitation of the first floor bathroom.[188]

Even with some loss of historic character resulting from periods of vacancy, instances of vandalism, and subsequent remodels that removed historic finishes and furnishings, the house retains most of its original detailing, including the elaborate Italianate woodwork, bay windows, porch railings, quoins, roof brackets, and the cupola. The nearly continuous program of repair, rehabilitation, and stabilization during the period of NPS management has kept the remaining historic features intact and in relatively good condition. A significant portion of historic fabric remains and the building retains a high degree of overall integrity.

Martinez Adobe

The Martinez Adobe is located at the western edge of the House Site. The front façade faces east toward the fruit orchards west of Franklin Creek. Constructed by Vicente Martinez in 1849, the two-story building exemplifies a nineteenth-century California ranch house. The dimensions of the historic adobe portion of the building (not including later additions) are irregular, measuring approximately 44' in length and varying from 21' wide on the south elevation to 19' wide on the north elevation. The foundation is rubble stone. The walls are sun-dried adobe brick ranging in thickness from 24" to 30" and are covered with plaster. The building has a hipped roof with wood shingles. A two-story veranda extends along the south and east sides. Other features include a Greek Revival dormer on the west side and octagonal columns and caps on the front porch.

The wood frame clapboard wall and brick chimney on the north side replaced the original adobe wall and chimney which were damaged in the 1906 earthquake. Other modifications occurring within the period of significance after the 1906 earthquake when Wanda Muir and her husband Tom Hanna moved in include: construction of the fireplace; installation of plumbing and electric wiring; replacement of the dirt floor with wood joists and oak board flooring; reduction in the number of upstairs bedrooms to two (the remaining four doors facing east suggest that at one time there were more rooms); extension of the veranda to the south side; and addition of the kitchen and upstairs lavatory on the southwest side. Also at this time, a wood frame cookhouse was moved from the west side of the adobe and attached to the southwest corner of the kitchen to serve as a dining room. The additions create a more complex roof system connected to the original adobe's hip roof. The two-story kitchen and lavatory addition has a shed roof, while a gable roof covers the dining room addition.

[188] Additional details on repairs and changes to the house from the end of the period of significance in 1914 to 2002 are included in ARG, *Historic Structure Report*, 13-16.

Wood frame additions post-dating the period of significance are located on the adobe's west façade. Completed between 1921 and 1955, these include a bedroom and bathroom addition measuring approximately 12' x 52' and a laundry room measuring roughly 10' x 12'. The additions rest on concrete foundations. They are covered with gable and shed roofs and clapboard siding. According to the 1992 *Historic Structure Report*, original hand-hewn roof framing members which historically supported a milk porch roof are set directly into the west adobe wall which is now covered by the additions.[189] The brick patio and surrounding wall on the west side date to the 1990s and overlay a driveway that provided access to building during the historic period. The open post and beam ramada connected to the patio with brick steps was built in 1998. It replaced a similar structure constructed in the 1930s and repaired in 1975.

Following acquisition of the property in 1964, the NPS restored the historic portion of the adobe to the period 1906 to 1914 when Wanda and Tom Hanna lived there. Although various plans were considered for the building's use as employee housing and visitor services, it ultimately served primarily as storage and exhibit space, and occasionally as sleeping quarters for children enrolled in the Environmental Living Program. During the 1980s, the adobe hosted meetings, weddings, and Posadas reenacting Joseph and Mary's Christmastime pilgrimage to Bethlehem.

Damage from the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake rendered the Martinez Adobe unsafe for overnight use, prompting completion of a *Historic Structure Report* in 1992. This was followed by a series of rehabilitations and seismic upgrades to prevent further settling of the foundation and cracking of the adobe walls. Projects completed in 1993 included seismic retrofitting with mechanical ties, installation of threaded fiberglass rods to connect the walls with a new roof, and installation of metal straps to secure the chimney. Additional work included accessibility modifications and rehabilitation of the east veranda in 1995, placement of a concrete foundation under the northeast corner in 1996, and patching of wall cracks.

A 2020 condition assessment identified deficiencies in the 1990s seismic upgrades and concluded that the building will likely sustain major damage and could possibly collapse during a large earthquake. Concerns included the connection details of the exterior adobe wall corners; the interface of the exterior perimeter adobe wall with the rubble stone foundation; lack of an adequate foundation to support the brick fireplace; lack of stability and lateral strength of the rubble stone foundation; a weak shear surface between the adobe walls and the roof; and cracking, warping, and settling due to soil compression. The report made recommendations for additional seismic strengthening including tying together the roof, walls, and foundation; or creating a base isolation system by replacing the current foundation with a stiff reinforced concrete perimeter ring foundation installed with "frictionless" pads between the foundation and adobe walls. Temporary shoring measures were also proposed while the park determined a course of action.[190] As of this writing (2022), the building is closed due to safety concerns. Prior to the closure, the building hosted office space and an exhibit on the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail on the first floor. The second floor was used for storage.

While the adobe's historic massing and external circulation patterns are obscured by the west side additions and patio and while the building is at high risk of major damage or collapse in the event of a large earthquake, most of the historic patterns of design and workmanship remain intact. This includes repairs and renovations attributed to Wanda Muir and Tom Hanna during the period of significance. Most of the historic exterior materials are retained, including the adobe walls, and the building currently displays a high degree of overall integrity.

[189] Burke, et al., *Historic Structure Report*, 177.

[190] James A. Mason, "Condition Assessment and Suggested Repairs of the Martinez Adobe Home," John Muir National Historic Site, National Park Service Vanishing Treasures Program, August 20, 2020, unpublished report on file at JOMU.

Carriage House

The one-story Carriage House was constructed ca. 1891 and is located at the junction of the Main Farm Road and Carriage Drive Loop, near the site of the former fishpond. The wood frame building measures approximately 18' x 20' and rests on brick piers. It features a gabled roof with wood shingles and a louvered vent, horizontal channel siding with corner boards, four wood sash windows, and two sliding and folding wood doors on the south side. A small lean-to addition is attached to the west side. The building is connected to the adjacent roads by a non-historic accessible wood plank ramp on the east side. The building is painted smoke white to match the Strenztel-Muir house.

Possibly prompted by a flood in 1937, the Kreiss family relocated the Carriage House to the east side of the Strentzel-Muir House by 1939. The NPS modified the building for use as a maintenance building soon after the creation of the park in 1964, replacing the wood shingles with a metal roof and the doors at the south end with a solid wall. Following recommendations in park planning documents, the NPS returned the Carriage House to its historic location and partially reconstructed it using historic and in-kind materials in 1983. This involved restoring the double doors on the southern end and the wood shingle roof. In 1987, trenching work for a new electric line was completed and in 1993, the accessible wood plank ramp was installed. The building currently serves as an exhibit space. Non-historic posts and beams visible on the interior reinforce the roof structure. Differing stain patterns are visible on the interior walls and the underside of the roof skip sheathing, indicating the use of salvaged historic materials in the 1983 reconstruction. In 2019, as part of a site accessibility project, handrails were installed along both sides of the non-historic wood ramp. The Carriage House is the only outbuilding surviving from Muir's time. It contributes to the historic character of the NHL district and retains a high degree of integrity.

Contributing Structure

Muir Farm Roads, Driveways, and Walkways[191]

Following John Strentzel's purchase of Redfern Place in 1874, the section of farm road that ran from the Martinez Adobe to agricultural lands east of Franklin Creek became part of an expanding network of earthen roads, macadamized driveways, and earthen and concrete paths connecting the various buildings and fields of the Strentzel ranch. While the historic design and extent of roads, driveways, and walkways that covered the full extent of the historic ranch is currently obscured by suburban development, key portions of the network remain, evoking historic patterns of transportation and use of the site. The following roads, driveways, and walkways are located within the House Site and contribute to the historic character of the NHL district.

The Main Farm Road was likely in place soon after construction of the Martinez Adobe in 1849. By the 1880s, it was one of the property's most important roads, serving as the primary route from Franklin Creek Road (which provided access to the town of Martinez) to the Strentzel mansion east of Franklin Creek. The east-west oriented road retains its historic location, running along the north side of the Martinez Adobe, crossing Franklin Creek (via a non-historic bridge), and ending in front of the Carriage House at the junction with the Carriage Drive Loop and Woodshed Road. Historically, the well-used earthen lane was generally level and averaged approximately ten feet in width. Muir considered macadamizing this road and others during the 1910s, but it remains unclear if this was done. The current seeded asphalt paving dates to 2021. The road retains its historic level appearance and 10' width.

[191] Information in this section comes from Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, ch. 8.

The driveway providing access to the front of the Martinez Adobe from the Main Farm Road likely dates to between 1874 when the building served as a ranch headquarters to 1906 when the Hannas converted it to a residence. This is the only remaining historic driveway at the Martinez Adobe. A former rear driveway is obscured by the non-historic west patio, while other paths around the house post-date the period of significance. The historic east driveway is approximately 8' wide and is surfaced in asphalt from the main farm road to the front steps and then gravel from the steps to the former site of a shed southeast of the adobe.

The Carriage Drive Loop, built in 1882, provides access to the Strentzel-Muir House from the Main Farm Road. The loop begins at the east end of the Main Farm Road near the Carriage House and tracks northeasterly up the west slope of the knoll before turning south and ending at a gently sloping loop at the front of the Strentzel-Muir House. Muir surfaced the original earthen road with gravel in the early 1910s. The loop was incorporated into the park's trail system after 1964 and was later covered with a soil cement surface. In the early 1980s, this surface was overlain with a brown hot asphalt plant mix and covered with a thin layer of sand to minimize the appearance of the asphalt. The current visible surface is seeded asphalt. The loop portion was also widened to accommodate emergency vehicles. Historic photographs suggest that the width of the road during the 1910s varied between 8' and 10'. The present road measures approximately 10' wide, broadening to 25' at the north end of the loop and 15' at the south end. The historic location is retained.

The East Driveway likely dates to ca. 1885 when the woodshed was built on the east side of the Strentzel-Muir House. The route extends across gently sloped ground on the east side of the house from Carriage Drive Loop to the former woodshed area. The driveway likely had a compacted earthen surface supplemented with gravel by the 1910s when Muir improved the Carriage Drive Loop. It is currently paved in asphalt and serves as part of the accessible route linking the non-contributing Visitor Center to the Strentzel-Muir House. The driveway retains its historic location and width of about 6'.

Woodshed Road, constructed ca. 1898, extends across a former dry yard area on the south slope of the knoll, linking the former woodshed area to the junction with the Main Farm Road and Carriage Drive Loop near the Carriage House. The road begins at the East Driveway, gradually descending the south and west slopes of the knoll until meeting the junction just west of the giant sequoia. Historically, the Woodshed Road intersected with the Southeast Farm Road (no longer extant) just south of the sequoia. The road then forked to the east and west of the sequoia, forming a triangle around the tree. The east fork is no longer extant. At the time of the park's establishment in 1964, only a trace of the Woodshed Road remained. In the early 1980s, the eastern section of the road to where it traverses the south slope was surfaced with a brown hot asphalt plant mix and covered with a thin layer of sand. The current surface of this section is asphalt. The lower portion still exists as a two-track dirt road which better retains the character of the historic road.

The Strentzel-Muir House perimeter walkways and front steps likely date to 1882 when the house was constructed. The walkways parallel the sides of house, rounding both front corners to connect at the entrance walkway which ascends a concrete stairway from the Carriage Drive Loop to the front house steps. They also provide access to the west porch, the laundry porch, the kitchen porch, and the basement door on the east side of the kitchen wing. The walkways have a width of approximately 3'-6" while the path to the front steps measures 7'-6" wide. The historic location appears to be retained except for the short section east of the kitchen wing which appears to have been moved closer to the house sometime after the period of significance. In 2014, 1,200 square feet of existing historic concrete sidewalks around the entrance path and exterior perimeter of the Strentzel-Muir House were restored to closely match the historic sidewalk surface, linear pattern, width, and curves. The walkway rounding the northeast corner of the house and the section providing access to the west porch also retain two-inch concrete curbs on either side which were present historically.

An additional concrete walkway extending from the southeast corner of the Strentzel-Muir House to Woodshed Road through what was historically the Victorian garden dates to ca. 1887 to 1890. Stone steps at the west end of the path provide access to Woodshed Road. A stone retaining wall runs on either side of the steps. The wall also extends north and south along the east side of Woodshed Road. The section of the wall north of the stone steps is composed of brick that is similar to the exterior brick on the 1890 Strentzel-Muir House south addition. The retaining wall also likely dates to ca. 1887 to 1890 when a woodshed was constructed in this area. Although overgrown and in poor condition, the steps and wall retain historic materials and are in their original locations. Another 60'-long walkway similar in composition to the Victorian garden walkway extends alongside the row of incense cedar trees northwest of the Strentzel-Muir House. The walkway does not connect with other existing walkways, and the period of construction and historic significance are undetermined.

Two non-historic asphalt paths provide access to the Strentzel-Muir House from the Visitor Center and parking lot. The 8'-wide Fire Lane connects the parking lot to the Carriage Drive Loop. The 5'-wide Easy Access Trail gradually ascends the east side of the knoll from the parking lot to connect with the Woodshed Road southeast of the Strentzel-Muir House. Dirt paths providing access to the orchards west of Franklin Creek also post-date the period of significance.

Even with changes in the surfacing of historic paths, the addition of some non-historic paths, and the loss of some historic routes (most notably the Southeast Farm Road), the surviving roads, driveways, and walkways within the House Site retain much of their character from the historic period and contribute to the district's high degree of integrity.

Contributing Sites

House Site[192]

The 8.9-acre House Site corresponds with the House Unit of John Muir National Historic Site. The site is bordered by California State Route 4 on its south side, Alhambra Avenue to the east, Canyon Way to the west, and residential development on its north side. The California Riding and Hiking Trail abuts the site at its southwest corner. The trail extends to Mount Wanda to the south and the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline to the northwest. The site contains all three contributing buildings, as well as the contributing network of farm roads, driveways, and walkways.

The site consists of a collection of built and natural features. The Strentzel-Muir House is situated atop a 30'-high knoll at the southeast corner and is a focal point of the site. Franklin Creek nearly bisects the site from north to south, establishing a dividing line between the Strentzel-Muir House and grounds to the east and the Martinez Adobe and its environs to the west. The Main Farm Road that historically conveyed traffic from the ranch entrance to the Strentzel-Muir House crosses Franklin Creek via a bridge near the northern site boundary and continues to provide access between the two sections. The Carriage House sits at the junction of the Main Farm Road, Carriage Loop Drive (which provides access to the house's front entrance), and Woodshed Road (which extends around the rear of the house). The site is further defined by a shallow swale north of the Carriage House where Dr. Strentzel constructed a fishpond during the historic period and where a hand-dug well currently exists; gradual slopes to the north and west of the knoll where non-historic fruit orchards and vineyards replicate the historic scene; and a level area between the Martinez Adobe and Franklin Creek containing pear, apricot, and orange orchards. The existing orchards were planted in the 1960s with similar

[192] Information in this section comes from Killian and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, ch. 8.

varieties to what existed historically. While most are compatible with the site's historic character, they are not considered historic.

A number of mature specimen trees planted during the historic period are extant at the House Site, with most concentrated around the Strentzel-Muir House. The park's 2005 *Cultural Landscape Report* provides detailed documentation of historic plantings and existing conditions at that time.[193] The following summary describes notable trees and other plantings that contribute to the historic character of the site.

The two California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) framing the Muir House entrance are distinctive features. The palms were planted around the time of the house's construction in 1882 and by 1914 had grown to approximately the level of the second-floor window. The west specimen may have partially blocked the view north from Muir's scribble den during his lifetime. The palms have continued to grow and currently tower above the top of the house, partially blocking the view north from the cupola. The Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) located on the southeast corner of the house near the kitchen door is the only other foundation planting known to date to the period of significance. The tree was planted between 1882 and 1890. It grew quickly, reaching the level of the second floor by 1905 and nearly reaching the eaves by 1910. The tree has been pruned regularly since the 1990s and currently reaches above the level of the cupola.

A row of nine incense cedar trees planted between 1882 and 1887 are located on the upper west slope of the Strentzel-Muir House knoll. The number is reduced from the twenty or so trees visible in historic photographs. Likely planted to provide shade and shelter from wind, and to create a barrier with working areas of the ranch, the trees have grown to the point that they now impede views between the Strentzel-Muir House and the Martinez Adobe. They are currently limbed up from the bottom and occasionally pruned. Two additional cedar trees, a lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) and an atlas (*Cedrus atlantica*), planted by 1898, are located just downslope from the row of incense cedars. Other historic specimen trees located on the Strentzel-Muir House knoll include the mourning cypress (*Cupressus funebris*) at the junction of Woodshed Road and the East Driveway, and the Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*) growing above the retaining wall at the junction of Woodshed Road and the Victorian garden walkway east of the house.

Several historic plantings are located along the Carriage Drive Loop. The giant sequoia at the junction with the Main Farm Road, Carriage Drive Loop, and Woodshed Road is a distinctive feature of the site and is associated with Muir's practice of planting seedlings from his travels. A core analysis dated the tree to approximately 1897. However, a photo of Dr. Strentzel standing near what may be the same sequoia surrounded by a white fence enclosure suggests that it may have been planted earlier, prior to Dr. Strentzel's death in 1890. The tree currently rises above the height of the house. The sequoia is in poor condition in comparison to trees in their native range and others in the immediate area. It requires regular treatment to control fungal infection and limit soil compaction. In 2013, Archangel Ancient Tree Archive successfully rooted vegetative cuttings from the tree and now maintains the living genetic clones of the original tree in its growing facility in Copemish, Michigan. Other historic plantings along the loop include four olive trees (*Olea europaea*), a Canary Island date palm, and two California fan palms along the north side of the drive; and an arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) and honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) south of the loop.

Additional historic plantings are located beyond the immediate Strentzel-Muir House vicinity. The row of fig trees (*Ficus carica*) located west of Franklin Creek along the north side of the Main Farm Road dates to ca. 1885. Currently only one mature tree survives from the historic period. The nine smaller trees are clones from the original stock. According to a 1978 tree survey, the row of quince shrubs (*Cydonia oblonga*) located

[193] Ibid., 340-360.

between the Main Farm Road and the former fishpond area are also remnants of plantings dating to ca. 1885. The large fruit-bearing fig in the same area may have been planted by Muir.[194] The seven eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus spp.*) along the southeast site boundary are remnants of a grove planted prior to 1910 and consist of several varieties acquired from Muir's neighbor and friend John Swett. Three of the seven are located outside the site boundary. The Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) and two Canary Island date palms located in the same area date to ca. 1905. One of the date palms is located just outside the site boundary.

In addition to the orchards and vineyards, numerous other plantings at the House Site post-date the period of significance. Examples identified in the 2005 *Cultural Landscape Report* include riparian vegetation along Franklin Creek; Strentzel-Muir House foundation plantings (other than those described above); several tree varieties growing on the lower east and west slopes of the knoll; pomegranate (*Punica grantum*), incense cedar trees, oak (*Quercus spp.*), and elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) located along Carriage Drive Loop; the Strentzel-Muir House flower gardens; plantings along the west site boundary; and plantings surrounding the Martinez Adobe. Many non-historic plantings are similar to varieties that existed during the period of significance and are compatible with the historic character. Plantings determined to be incompatible in the *Cultural Landscape Report* do not substantially diminish the overall site integrity. The ages of some specimen trees—including the prominent California laurel in the Carriage Drive Loop center island—are undetermined, requiring additional research.

Mount Wanda[195]

The Mount Wanda Site comprises 326.25 acres of oak woodland and grass covered hills south of the House Site. It is separated from the House Site by California State Route 4, Franklin Canyon Road, and the BNSF rail corridor. Views of the north slope of Mount Wanda from the Strentzel-Muir House cupola preserve a sense of connection between the two sites. The Mount Wanda Site boundaries nearly correspond with the boundaries of the Mount Wanda Unit of John Muir National Historic Site. Two areas are excluded from the NHL: a 44-acre parcel known as West Hill Farm which is expected (as of 2022) to be added to the park but which was never part of the Strentzel-Muir property; and six small contiguous parcels (two privately owned, three city-owned, and one NPS-owned) at the northeast corner of the unit. While these parcels were part of the historic Strentzel-Muir property, their dominant features post-date the period of significance and they do not possess the high level of integrity needed for inclusion within the NHL. These features include the park maintenance facility constructed in 2002, a row of walnut trees likely dating to the 1930s, a segment of the California Riding and Hiking Trail, the BNSF rail corridor including a section of viaduct, the Mount Wanda parking lot, and a portion of the non-historic Mount Wanda fire road. Four of the six parcels are also separated from the rest of Mount Wanda by the BNSF rail corridor.

The site ranges in elevation from 120' to 670' and contains the summits of both Mount Wanda and Mount Helen, named after John and Louie Muir's two daughters. The site is located within the Alhambra Creek watershed and is bordered by Alhambra Creek to the east and Franklin Creek to the north. The seasonal Strentzel Creek flows east from the southern portion of the site. Major vegetation communities include blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) woodland, valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) woodland, coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) woodland, California laurel forest, and grasslands primarily comprised of non-native grasses.[196]

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[194] James K. Agee, *Historic Trees of John Muir National Historic Site* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1978), 5-6.

[195] Except where otherwise indicated, information in this section comes from Killian and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, ch. 8.

[196] Sean Baumgarten, Erin Beller, Robin Grossinger, and Ruth Askevold, *Mt. Wanda Historical Ecology Investigation: A Reconnaissance Study Investigating Historical Landscape Data for the John Muir National Historic Site*, Publication #743 (Richmond, CA: San Francisco Estuary Institute-Aquatic Science Center, 2015), 2.

Muir deliberately refrained from ranching on the slopes of Mount Wanda to preserve their natural beauty. The hills were a frequent destination for walks and picnics with family, friends, and colleagues, and gave Muir an opportunity to share his interest in nature with his daughters and to provide instruction in botany. His mother-in-law Louisiana Strentzel admired the "dark green of the buckeye, laurel, and live oaks" that grew on the hillsides and envisioned a time when "other generations will be here to enjoy the scene."[197]

A 1939 aerial photograph reveals that the upper slopes of Mount Wanda were mostly grassland interspersed with patches of woodlands extending down into the ravines and draws of the mountain. The steeper-sloped northern and eastern sides were more wooded than the southern and western slopes. This pattern is likely similar to what existed during the period of significance and is retained in the present.

A roughly five-acre remnant olive orchard that dates to Muir's period as ranch manager grows on a relatively dry southeast-facing slope south of Strentzel Creek. More than 120 historic trees are present. The park's 2006 *Orchard Management Plan* describes the form of the trees as "low-headed" with short trunks of no more than thirty inches and an open bowl pruning style that was common during the historic period. The historic spacing of approximately 30' apart is still evident, and the rows are terraced on the steeper slopes to permit easier access.[198] Genetic testing in 2021 dated the orchard to ca. 1873 to 1880 and indicated that it primarily consisted of Mission olives with smaller numbers of Redding Picholine olives and Manzanillo de Sevilla olives.[199] A 2004 plant community survey noted olive saplings encroaching into the adjacent California laurel and oak forest.[200]

Mount Wanda is accessed by a network of dirt fire roads and foot trails. Although non-historic, the foot trails are likely similar to paths that existed during the historic period. They also provide access to views of the grass-covered upper slopes and forested draws and ravines. Viewsheds that contribute to the historic character also include the undeveloped hills to the west and southwest, as well as Mount Diablo to the southeast. These views are relatively unchanged from those that existed during Muir's time. Views to the east and north to the Carquinez Strait encompass non-historic suburban and industrial development that diminishes integrity of setting and feeling to some degree, but overall a high level of integrity is retained.

Other non-historic elements of the Mount Wanda site include two small watering holes as well as troughs, cisterns, and other small structures associated with livestock grazing after the period of significance; modern benches and interpretive signs; and a grouping of non-historic ranch buildings and corrals along Strain Ranch Road. These elements make a small imprint on the site and do not significantly detract from integrity of setting and feeling. The non-contributing Strain Ranch buildings are not visible from most areas of the site.

Strentzel-Muir Gravesite[201]

The 1.27-acre Strentzel-Muir Gravesite is located in a residential neighborhood on the west bank of Alhambra Creek, approximately one mile south of the Strentzel-Muir House. This is near the site of the Strentzels'

[197] Quoted in Killian and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 68.

[198] Susan Dolan, Kimball Koch, and David Blackburn, *Orchard Management Plan for John Muir National Historic Site* (National Park Service, Pacific West Region, 2006), 37, 63-64.

[199] University of California, Davis, Foundation Plant Services, and NPS, DOI Region 10, *Genetic Analysis and History of the Mt. Wanda Olive Orchard at John Muir National Historic Site*, draft under review (2021), 22, JOMU files.

[200] O'Neil and Egan, *Plant Community Classification and Mapping Project*, 29.

[201] Except where otherwise indicated, information in this section is from Killian and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, ch. 8.

original Alhambra ranch house (no longer extant) where John and Louie Muir lived after their marriage in 1880. A small remnant pear orchard is located within the site, adjacent to the burial plot. The historic rootstock planted by Dr. Strentzel reflects his practice of grafting with multiple varieties. Scion wood of the commercial Bartlett variety grafted to the rootstock by Muir is also extant.[202] While only a few historic trees remain, young trees cloned from the original rootstock have recently been planted, recreating a more discernable planting pattern. The site also contains specimen trees including California laurel, incense cedar trees, and eucalyptus. During Dr. John Strentzel's burial service in 1890, Muir admired the large eucalyptus growing at the site, describing it as a guardian angel watching over the graves. Muir's 1914 funeral service was reportedly held under the tree, which is still located near the center of the site.

The Strentzel family gravesite was formally set out in 1890 when Dr. Strentzel died, although it may have been established as early as 1857 with the death of the Strentzels' son John Erwin. It is not clear if a marker was erected at that time. Sometime during the historic period, three small Raymond granite headstones measuring 20" by 8" by 10" with arched tops were erected at the site. The headstones are engraved with the names John Erwin (died 1857); Lottie (the Strentzel's younger daughter who died as a young child at an unknown date); and Uncle Henry (Dr. Strentzel's brother, died September 3, 1865). It is not known if any of these individuals are actually interred at the site.

All the burials and grave markers are located in a low, rectangular granite enclosure constructed in 1890. The enclosure measures 26' x 34' and is composed of a carved wall, 1' high x 1' wide, set upon a concrete foundation. It is broken by a 4'-wide granite step entryway on the west side, which is flanked by two 18"-high pillars inscribed with the date 1890. John Hanna, one of Tom and Wanda's sons, enclosed the graves with a chain-link fence in the 1960s to prevent vandalism. Sometime after 1993, the American Land Conservancy, which had earlier acquired the property, replaced this fence with the current wrought-iron picket fence which includes a locked gate opposite the entryway. Although the fence impedes views and access to the graves, it serves as a deterrent to vandalism and does not substantially detract from the historic character of the site. All the grave markers are in good condition.

Dr. Strentzel's burial place is marked by a granite obelisk erected on a two-tiered chamfered granite base. The marker measures approximately 4' x 4' at the base and is about 5' high. The obelisk is inscribed with Dr. Strentzel's name, date of birth, and date of death. It also includes the names of his wife Louisiana, who died in 1897, and son John Erwin.

Louie Muir's grave marker, placed in 1905, measures 36" x 14" at the chamfered base and is 36" tall with an arched top and rusticated sides. The front surface is polished and inscribed with her name, birthplace and date, date of death, and a floral engraving. A headstone of the same design, placed in 1914, marks the burial place of John Muir.

The burial plot also contains the graves of Wanda Muir Hanna, who died in 1942, and her husband Tom Hanna, who died in 1947. Their granite markers lie next to each other and are flush to the ground. They are roughly cut 36" x 14" x 8"-thick slabs. The top surfaces are inscribed with their names, dates of birth, and dates of death.

Although surrounded by non-historic residential development, the creekside gravesite is screened with vegetation and retains a quiet, contemplative atmosphere. Visual and auditory distractions are minimal. In 2021, to facilitate public access, the NPS installed a small gravel parking area at the entrance, a paved wheelchair accessible footpath to the grave markers, an interpretive wayside panel and bench, and new perimeter fence. In

[202] Dolan, et al., *Orchard Management Plan*, 66-67.

accordance with the park's *Cultural Landscape Report* treatment plan, additional pear trees were also planted and non-contributing vegetation was removed. These changes aid interpretation and only minimally affect historic character of the site. The presence of the remnant orchard and specimen trees, especially the eucalyptus believed to be associated with Muir's 1914 funeral service, further contribute to the site's high degree of integrity.

Non-Contributing Resources Description

Non-contributing resources within NHL district primarily include buildings, parking lots, roads, walkways, fencing, and other structures constructed after the period of significance. Some are associated with later land uses, such as livestock grazing, while others provide for visitor access, interpretation, or security for John Muir House National Historic Site. A bungalow in the Mount Wanda Site which likely dates to the late nineteenth century is believed to have been built after John Muir sold the land to another party.

Non-Contributing Buildings

John Muir National Historic Site Visitor Center (1)

The one-story cinder block visitor center is located on the eastern edge of the House Site at Alhambra Avenue. Constructed in 1964 to serve as an animal hospital, the building was acquired by the NPS and used for office space and as a visitor center around that time. The building was remodeled in 1974 and renovated again in 2011.

Strain Ranch Buildings (5)

In 2019, the park removed six non-historic portable buildings and two wooden structures along Strain Ranch Road near the southeast corner of Mount Wanda. A barn and three small outbuildings dating to 1930 to 1968 are still located in the area. An additional single-family residence at the west end of the road dates to 1978. The buildings were all constructed after the period of significance, do not contribute to the John Muir Home historic district, and have been determined ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Strain Ranch Bungalow (1)

A one-story bungalow believed to date to the late nineteenth century is located just south of the entrance to Strain Ranch within the Mount Wanda Site. Property deeds reveal that John Muir sold the land to Roger Cutler in 1892. The deed does not reference a house on the parcel at the time of the sale. In 2017, a Determination of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places was completed for the bungalow. Based on extensive archival research, the report concluded that the bungalow lacks an association with John Muir and thus is not a contributing resource to the historic district.

Non-Contributing Structures

Franklin Creek Windmill and Well (2)

The windmill at the site of the former House Site fishpond was erected in 1983. The 1932 model Aermotor windmill is similar to the windmill present at the same location during Muir's time. The associated well and pump were brought into service in 1983. An electric pump and irrigation network for the northern half of the

site were installed in 1990. Although the windmill is similar in appearance to the historic structure, it is a modern model and does not contain any historic materials.

Alhambra Well (1)

A well located at the bottom of the knoll northeast of the Muir House is marked by a square wood plank structure topped by a smaller square wood cover and hatch. Although a well and windmill existed at this site during the historic period, the windmill is now gone. Modifications to the well in 1989 included installation of an electric pump to extend irrigation to the southern section of the House Site. Although the well is in its original location and continues to serve its historic function of providing irrigation, its integrity is severely diminished due to the loss of the windmill and the replacement of the historic pump with a modern electric pump.

Horno (1)

The beehive-shaped horno (wood-fired earthen oven) located south of the Martinez Adobe near the southwestern corner of the House Site was constructed in 1992 for use by the Environmental Education Program.

Franklin Creek Bridge and Stabilization Structures (5)

Originally constructed in 1965, the wooden bridge spanning Franklin Creek on the Main Farm Road replaced a series of temporary structures installed after a flood washed out the historic bridge in 1915. The bridge was re-planked in 1981 and mostly rebuilt in 1996. It consists of 3” x 10” wood planks fastened into steel beams that span between stone abutments. It measures approximately 20’ long x 8’ wide and includes wood safety rails. Between the 1960s and 1980s, a series of stabilization structures were also installed along Franklin Creek for flood control and to protect the bridge. These include an outflow headwall at the site’s south boundary, a small concrete and stone check dam downstream from the bridge, an earthen berm on the east bank adjacent to the vineyard, concrete filled sandbags at the east bank of the creek near the outflow, and a shallow bypass channel on the east end of the bridge that continues northeasterly along the boundary fence to a scupper wall and diversion wall. Most of the stabilization structures are screened from view and create only minor changes to the character of Franklin Creek within the House Site.

House Site Boundary Fencing and Gates (1)

Originally installed in the 1960s, a chain link fence with extension arms and barbed wire marks the southern boundary of the House Site, creating a barrier to California State Route 4. The remainder of the site is enclosed with 6’ to 1’-tall Hartman grapestake (Rustake) fencing painted brown and attached to concrete post foundations. This fencing was erected in 1967 and is now partially screened with vegetation. Locked gates are positioned at various points along the fenceline. Other gates include a locking pedestrian gate at the main park entrance, a breakaway gate at the Main Farm Road entrance at Franklin Creek Road to provide emergency vehicle access, and a swing gate adjacent to the Franklin Creek Bridge to raise during high water events. Most of the fences and gates were rehabilitated in 1998. A chainlink fence along the visitor parking lot was replaced with a wire mesh fence with steel posts, all coated brown color, in 2013.

Visitor Center Parking Lot (1)

Originally constructed in 1964, the parking lot adjacent to the south side of the Visitor Center includes an

asphalt surface and concrete curbs. It accommodates seventeen vehicles and one bus, and serves both visitors and staff. In 2013, the parking lot was repaved and modified to include accessible routes and curb cuts to meet the federal accessibility requirements.

Visitor Center Patio and Walkways (2)

Concrete sidewalks along the east and west sides of the Visitor Center date to 1964. The concrete patio and 80'-long retaining wall on the west side of the building were built the same year. Asphalt walkways leading from the Visitor Center provide access to the Strentzel-Muir House and grounds. Non-contributing circulation resources that begin at the Visitor Center and parking lot include: the 8'-wide Fire Lane which connects to Carriage Drive Loop; and the 5'-wide Easy Access Trail which gradually ascends the east side of the knoll to connect with the Woodshed Road southeast of the Muir House.

Martinez Adobe Patio and Ramada (2)

The brick patio and surrounding brick wall on the west side of the Martinez Adobe were constructed in 1998. The patio replaced a smaller patio built in the 1930s which covered a driveway that existed by 1910. The open post and beam ramada accessed by brick stairs from the patio dates to 1998. It replaced a similar structure built in the 1930s and repaired in 1975. The ramada sits on a concrete pad with picnic tables. It measures approximately 15' x 30' and is about 9' tall.

Martinez Adobe Paths (1)

With the exception of the east driveway, all paths surrounding the Martinez Adobe date to after the period of significance. These include a path on the north side of the building leading from the rear patio to the front driveway; two paths connecting to the Main Farm Road, a path leading from the ramada around the south side of the adobe to connect to the east driveway, a short path from the ramada to the pedestrian gate on the west fence, and a longer path connecting to the California Riding and Hiking Trail outside the southwest site boundary. The paths are variously comprised of compacted earth and gray gravel. Some are contained by a flexible Trex border. Although not directly connected to paths adjacent to the Martinez Adobe, dirt paths providing access to the orchards east of the adobe also post-date the period of significance.

Strain Ranch Corral (1)

A small corral associated with the Strain Ranch Buildings is located in the Mount Wanda Site. The corral dates to between 1930 and 1968, after the period of significance.

Mount Wanda Livestock Structures (3)

Structures associated with livestock grazing in the decades following Muir's death are scattered around Mount Wanda. These include a rectangular concrete trough measuring approximately 4' x 8' and partially filled with vegetation and structural debris; an empty, shallow stock pond with a concrete-lined drainage on its northern side; and a circular metal water trough with a diameter of approximately 4' and a height of about 2'. While the earliest possible date of construction for the water troughs is 1906, the features likely date to a later period and are not associated with Muir's life or contributions to conservation.[203]

[203] Christina Alonso, Roberta Thomas, Ashley Schmutzler, Kim Johnson, Chandra Miller, and Zackary Babineau, *Final Archaeological Resources Report in Support of the John Muir National Historic Site and Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site*

Mount Wanda Fire Roads and Trails (1)

The main dirt fire road providing access to Mount Wanda gradually ascends the eastern slope from the park and ride lot at the northeast corner of the park unit before turning west and north to provide access to the grassy upper slopes. The road continues west, ending at a gate at the west site boundary. Another branch extends south along the summit ridge, eventually descending to Strain Ranch Road which connects to Alhambra Valley Road near the southeast corner of the site. An additional fire road encircles the lower west, south, and east slopes of the site while a foot trail winds along the upper northern slope. Another foot trail descends a ravine on the east slope to connect to Alhambra Avenue. Benches and interpretive signs installed after the NPS acquired the property in 1992 are located along many of the trails. While these routes post-date the period of significance, they are likely similar to paths that existed during Muir's time.

Strentzel-Muir Burial Plot Fence and Gate (1)

The black wrought iron picket fence that surrounds the family burial plot was installed sometime after 1993, replacing a chain link fence installed in the 1960s by John Hanna, son of Wanda and Tom Hanna, to prevent vandalism. The fence stands about 6' high and measures approximately 35' x 27'. It includes a gate at the front entrance to the burial plot.

Strentzel-Muir Gravesite Parking and Walkway (2)

A gravel parking area with a concrete shuttle bus parking space is located at the western edge of the site. This area was likely part of the pear orchard during the historic period. A wheelchair accessible concrete path runs from the parking area to the burial plot where there is an interpretive sign and bench. These were all constructed in 2021.

Strentzel-Muir Gravesite Perimeter Fence (1)

Constructed in 2021, an approximately 3'-high wood and wire perimeter fence with locking pedestrian and vehicle gates surrounds the site.

Non-Contributing Object

California Historical Markers Monument (1)

California Registered Historical Landmark plaques for the Muir House and Martinez Adobe are set into a wedge-shaped stone monument located in front of the visitor center. The monument was constructed in 1983 and measures 8' long x 4' wide x 30" deep, tapering to 1' deep at the top.

Project, Contra Costa California, Technical Report NO. 21-21 (Walnut Creek: PaleoWest, June 24, 2021), 30, 34-39.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_X_ Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)
__ Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 66000083
2. Date of listing: November 22, 1966, updated May 23, 1978
3. Level of significance: national and state
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X_ B_X_ C_X (state level of significance)_ D__
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__
6. Areas of Significance: Conservation, Literature, Science, Social/Humanitarian, Agriculture (state level of significance), Architecture (state level of significance)

__ Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register:	Date of determination:
_X_ Designated a National Historic Landmark:	Date of designation: December 29, 1962
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey:	HABS No. CA-1890 (Muir House) CA-1913 (Martinez Adobe)
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record:	HAER No.
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey:	HALS No. CA-132

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office:
Other State Agency:
Federal Agency: National Park Service, John Muir National Historic Site
Local Government:
University:
Other (Specify Repository):

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Date: December 9, 2022

Maps and Figures Log

Strentzel-Muir Ranch National Historic Landmark location.

Locations and boundaries of the three discontiguous sites comprising the Strentzel-Muir Ranch National Historic Landmark.

Figure 1: House Site, site plan.

Figure 2: Mount Wanda, site plan.

Figure 3: Key to plants at John Muir National Historic Site.

Figure 4: Strentzel-Muir Gravesite, site plan.

Figure 5: Strentzel-Muir House floor plan, basement and first floor.

Figure 6: Strentzel-Muir House floor plan, second floor and attic.

Figure 7: Martinez Adobe floor plan, cross section, and detail of porch posts.

Figure 8: Dr. John Strentzel at Redfern Place with the Main Farm Road, Windmill, and Martinez Adobe visible, 1880s. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 D6-1.

Figure 9: Wanda and Helen Muir standing near a barn and corral at the Martinez Adobe, late 1880s. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 A-16.

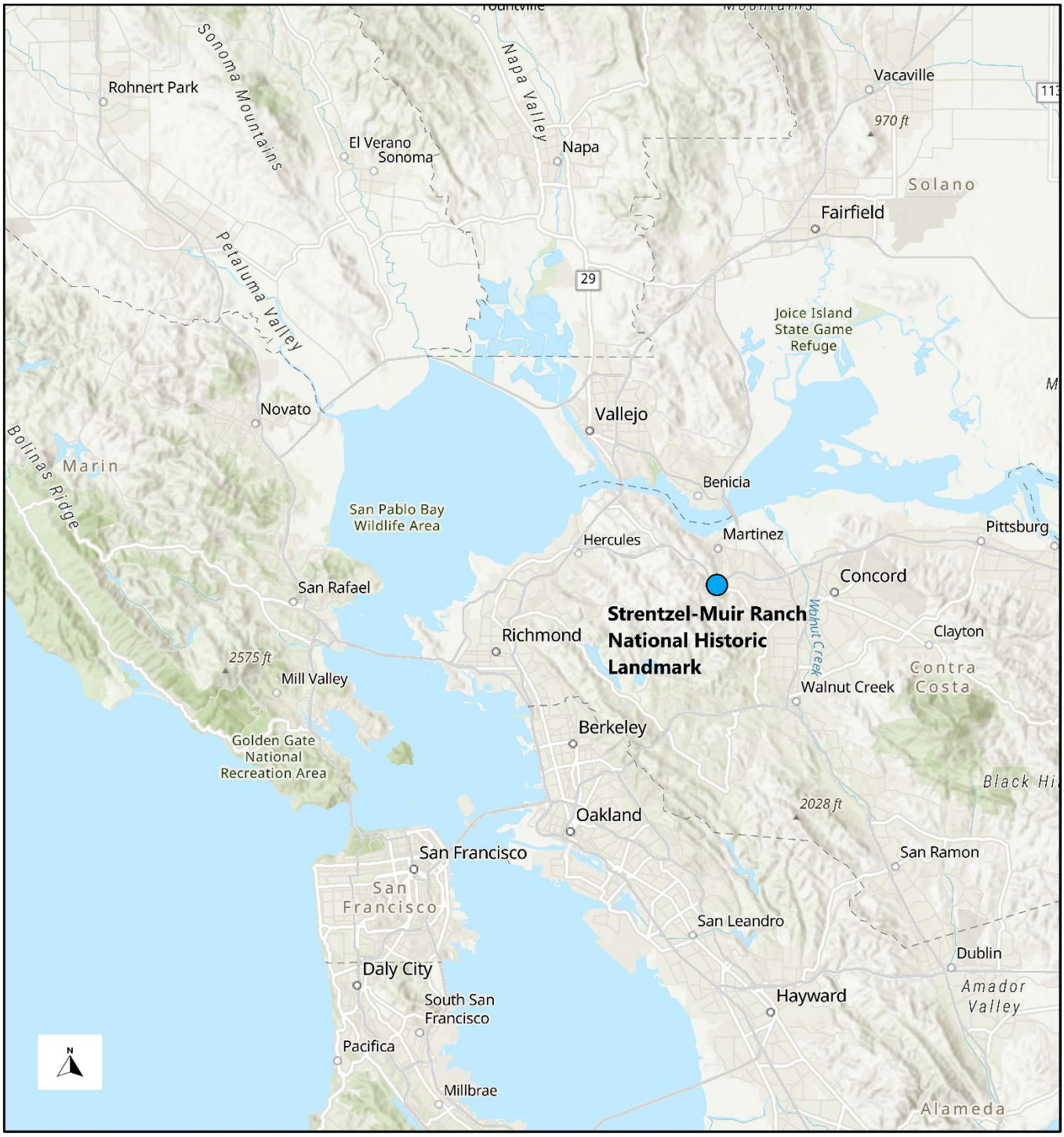
Figure 10: Strentzel-Muir House, ca. 1890. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 1729.

Figure 11: Overhead view of the Strentzel-Muir House and vicinity, ca. 1900, camera facing north. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 A1-15.

Figure 12: From left to right: Wanda, Helen, Louie, and John Muir, with their family dog Keeney. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 1732.

Figure 13: Strentzel and John Hanna (Wanda and Tom Hanna's children) in front of the Martinez Adobe, ca. 1912-1913. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 B1-39.

Figure 14: John Muir commemoration at his gravesite, ca. 1935. The eucalyptus is still present at the site. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 H1-99.



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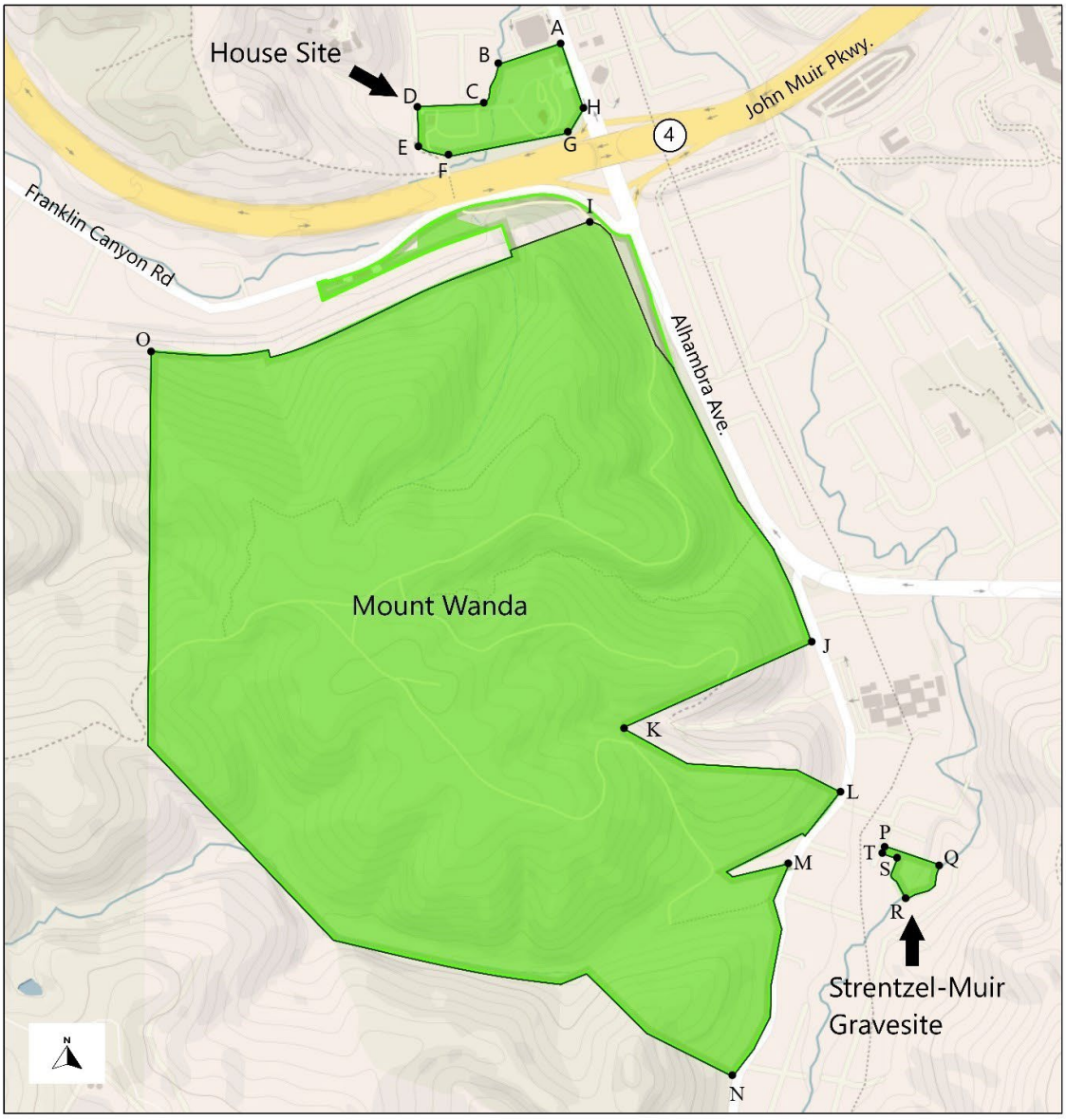
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California State Parks, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS

Strenztel-Muir Ranch National Historic Landmark location. Christopher E. Johnson, December 9, 2022.



Locations and boundaries of the three discontiguous sites comprising the Strentzel-Muir Ranch National Historic Landmark. Christopher E. Johnson, August 3, 2021.

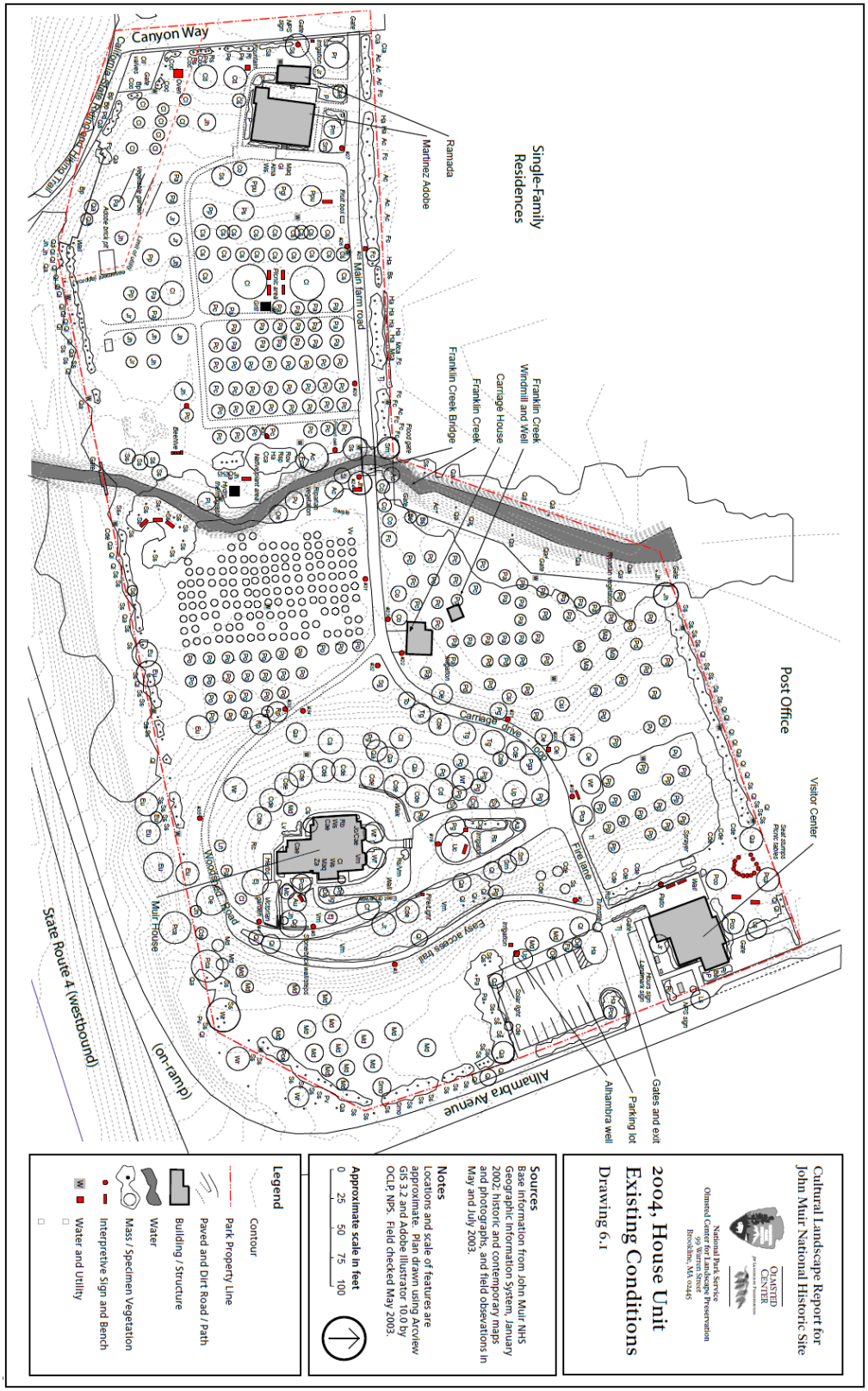


Figure 1: House Site, site plan. Alterations since 2004 include thinning of some non-historic trees, removal of the adobe fire pit and vegetable garden near the southwest corner, and removal of the bee hive and native plant garden near the west bank of Franklin Creek. See Figure 3 below for key to plants at John Muir National Historic Site. Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 287.

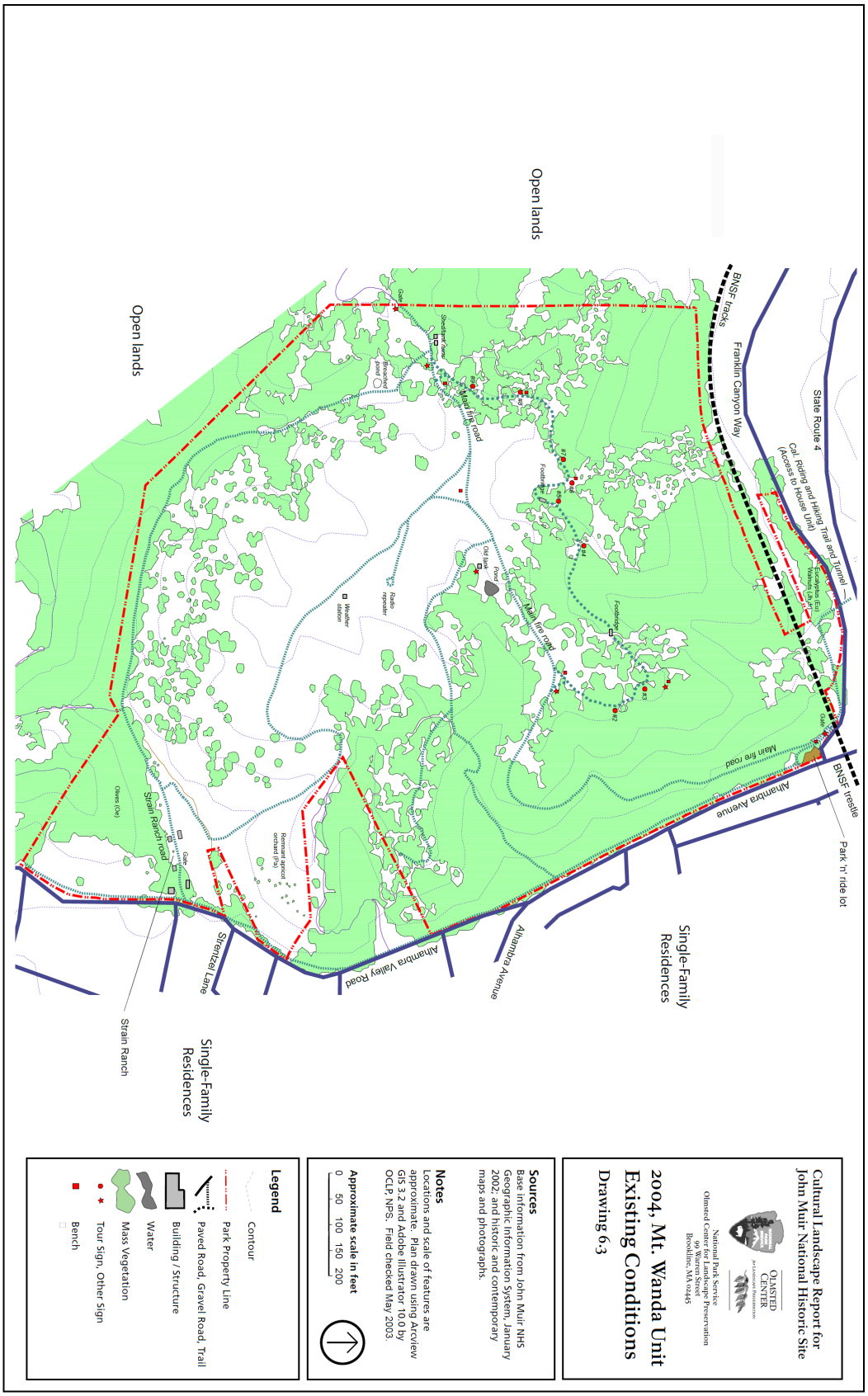


Figure 2: Mount Wanda, site plan. Note that the remnant apricot orchard identified near the southeast boundary is no longer present. Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 291.

Plants at John Muir National Historic Site

Code	Botanical Name	Common Name(s)
Aa	Agave americana	Century plant
Ac	Aesculus californica	California buckeye
Aj	Aucuba japonica	Variegated gold dust plant
Al	Acacia longifolia	Golden Wattle
Am	Acanthus mollis	Bear's breach
Ama	Arctostaphylos manzanita	Manzanita
Ar	Alcea rosea	Hollyhock
Ard	Arundo donax	Giant reed
Au	Arbutus unedo	Strawberry tree
Bp	Baccharis pilularis	Dwarf coyote brush
Bs	Buddleia spp.	Butterfly bush
Bu	Buxus spp.	Boxwood
Ca	Cedrus atlantica	Atlas cedar
Cae	Casmanthe aethiopica	Chasmanthe
Cc	Callistemon citrinus	Lemon bottle brush
Cca	Carpenteria californica	Anemone
Cd	Cedrus deodara	Deodar cedar
Cda	Cotoneaster dammeri	Bearberry cotoneaster
Cde	Calocedrus decurrens	Incense cedar
Cf	Cupressus funebris	Mourning cypress
Ch	Chrysanthemum spp.	Chrysanthemum
Ci	Carya illinoensis	Pecan
Cj	Camellia japonica	Camellia
Cl	Citrus limon	Lemon
Cla	Crataegus laevigata	English hawthorn
Clg	Chaenomeles lagenaria	Japanese, Flowering quince
Cli	Cedrus libani	Cedar of Lebanon
Cm	Cupressus macrocarpa	Monterey cypress
Co	Cydonia oblonga	Quince
Coc	Cercis occidentalis	Western redbud
Cp	Campanula medium	Canterbury bells
Cr	Campsis radicans	Common trumpet vine
Cs	Citrinus sinensis	Orange
Csc	Cytisus scoparius	Scotch broom
Cse	Cornus sericea	American dogwood
Csi	Ceratonia siliqua	Carob
Csp	Cupressus spp.	Cypress
Cy	Cordyline spp.	Cordyline
Dc	Dianthus caryophyllus	Carnation
Ds	Deutzia scabra	Deutzia
Ec	Eschscholzia californica	California poppy
Ej	Eriobotrya japonica	Loquat
Eu	Eucalyptus spp.	Eucalyptus
Fc	Ficus carica	Common fig
Fca	Fremontodendron californica	Flannel bush
Fs	Feijoa sellowiana	Pineapple guava
Ge	Geranium spp.	Geranium
Gl	Gaura lindheimeri	Gaura
Gs	Gladiolus spp.	Gladiolus
Ha	Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon
He	Heliotropium arboresciens	Heliotrope
Ig	Iris germanica	Bearded iris
Jc	Juniperus conferta	Shore juniper
Jh	Juglans hindsii	California black walnut
Jm	Jasminum mesnyi	Primrose jasmine
Jr	Juglans regia	English walnut
La	Lavendula angustifolia	English lavender
Lc	Lonicera spp.	Honeysuckle
Ln	Laurus nobilis	Sweet bay
Lo	Ligustrum ovalifolium	California privet
Ls	Liquidambar styraciflua	Sweetgum
Lsp	Lampranthus spectabilis	Trailing ice plant
Lv	Ligustrum vulgare	Common privet
Ma	Morus alba	White mulberry
Maq	Mahonia aquifolium	Oregon grape holly
Mc	Myrtus communis	True or Common myrtle
Mca	Myrica californica	Pacific wax myrtle
Md	Malus domestica	Apple
My	Myosolus spp.	Forget-me-not
Ng	Nicotiana glauca	Tobacco tree
No	Nerium oleander	Oleander
Oe	Olea europea	Common olive
Oh	Osmanthus heterophyllus	False holly
P	Perennials	Perennials
Pa	Prunus armeniaca	Apricot
Pap	Papaver spp.	Pink poppy
Pc	Pyrus communis	Pear
Pca	Phoenix canariensis	Canary Island date palm
Pcc	Pyracantha coccinea	Firethorn
Pce	Prunus cerasifera	Cherry plum
Pco	Pinus coulteri	Coulter pine
Pd	Prunus dulcis	Almond
Pe	Pittosporum eugenioides	Pittosporum
Pg	Punica grantum	Pomegranate
Pga	Prosopis glandulosa	Honey mesquite
Pgl	Picea glauca	White spruce
Ph	Pelargonium hortorum	Common geranium
Pin	Pinus spp.	Pine
Pl	Philadelphus lemoinei	Mockorange
Ply	Prunus lyonii	Catalina cherry
Pm	Pseudotsuga menziesii	Douglas fir
Po	Prunus domestica	European plum
Pp	Prunus persica	Peach
Ppn	Pinus ponderosa	Ponderosa pine
Ppu	Picea pungens	Colorado spruce
Pr	Pinus radiata	Monterey pine
Ps	Picea sitchensis	Sitka spruce
Psa	Prunus salcina	Japanese plum
Pv	Prunus avium	Sweet cherry
Qa	Quercus agrifolia	Coast live oak
Qg	Quercus garryana	Oregon white oak
Ql	Quercus lobata	Valley oak, Cal. white oak
Qs	Quercus suber	Cork oak
Rb	Rosa banksiae	Lady Bank's rose
Rc	Romneya coulteri	Matilija poppy
Rh	Rosa harisonii	Harison's yellow rose
Ri	Rhaphiolepis indica	India hawthorn
Rl	Rosa laevigata	Cherokee rose
Ro	Rosmarinus officinalis	Rosemary
Rod	Rosa odorata	Tea rose
Rov	Rhus ovata	Sugar bush
Rp	Robinia pseudoacacia	Black locust
Rs	Rosa spp.	Rose
Rsp	Ribes speciosum	Fuschia flowering currant
Sa	Salvia spp.	Sage
Sg	Sequoiadendron giganteum	Giant sequoia
Sl	Salix lasiandra	Yellow willow
Sm	Sambucus mexicana	Blue elderberry
Sp	Spiraea prunifolia	Bridal wreath spiraea
Smo	Schinus molle	Pepper tree
Ss	Sequoia sempervirens	Coast redwood
Sv	Syringa vulgaris	Common lilac
Tf	Trachycarpus fortuneii	Windmill palm
Tg	Tamarix gallica	Tamarisk
Ti	Trifolium incarnatum	Crimson clover
Tj	Trachelospermum jasminoides	Star jasmine
To	Thuja occidentalis	American arborvitae
U	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
Uc	Umbellularia californica	California bay
Up	Ulmus pumila	Siberian elm
Ve	Verbena spp.	Verbena
Vm	Vinca major	Periwinkle
Vo	Viola odorata	Sweet violet
Vv	Vitus vinifera	Grape
Wf	Washingtonia filafera	California fan palm
Wr	Washingtonia robusta	Mexican fan palm
Ws	Wisteria sinensis	Chinese wisteria
Za	Zantedeschia aethiopica	Common calla

Figure 3: Key to plants at John Muir National Historic Site. Killion and Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report*, 54.

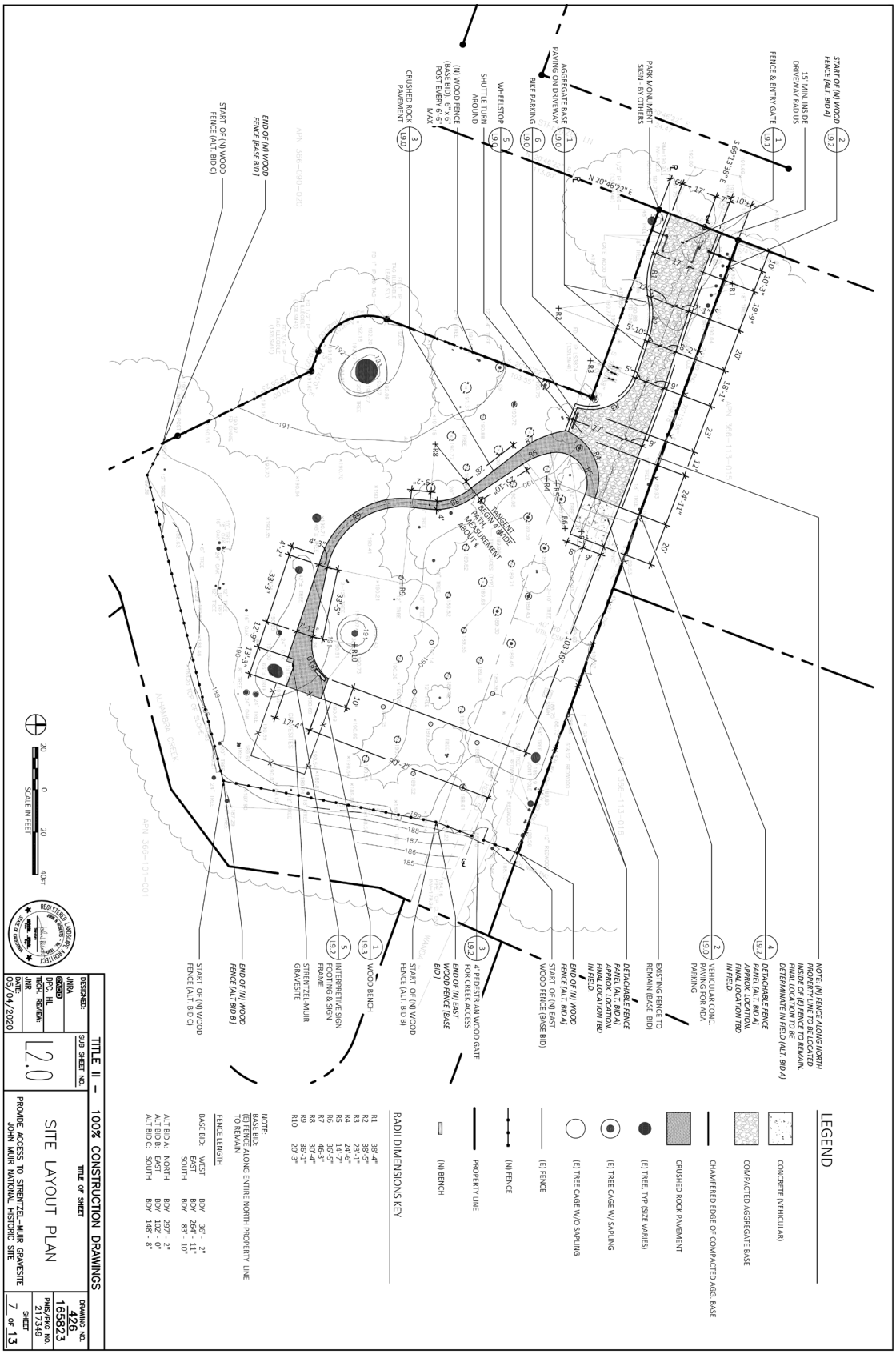


Figure 4: Strentzel-Muir Gravesite, site plan showing tree cover, including new pear plantings, as well as public access and interpretive additions completed in 2021. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site.

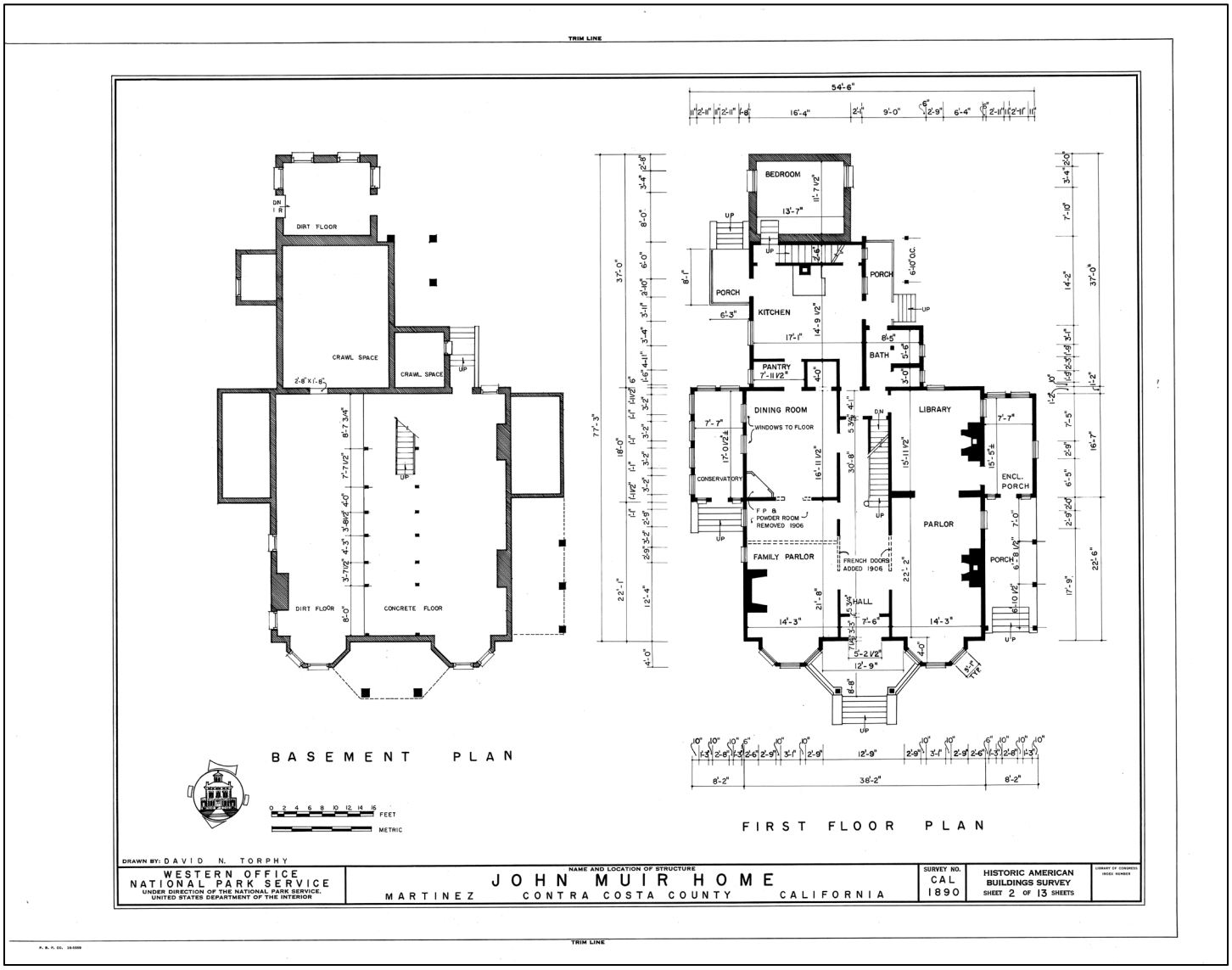


Figure 5: Strentzel-Muir House floor plan, basement and first floor. Historic American Buildings Survey Collection, HABS CA-1890.

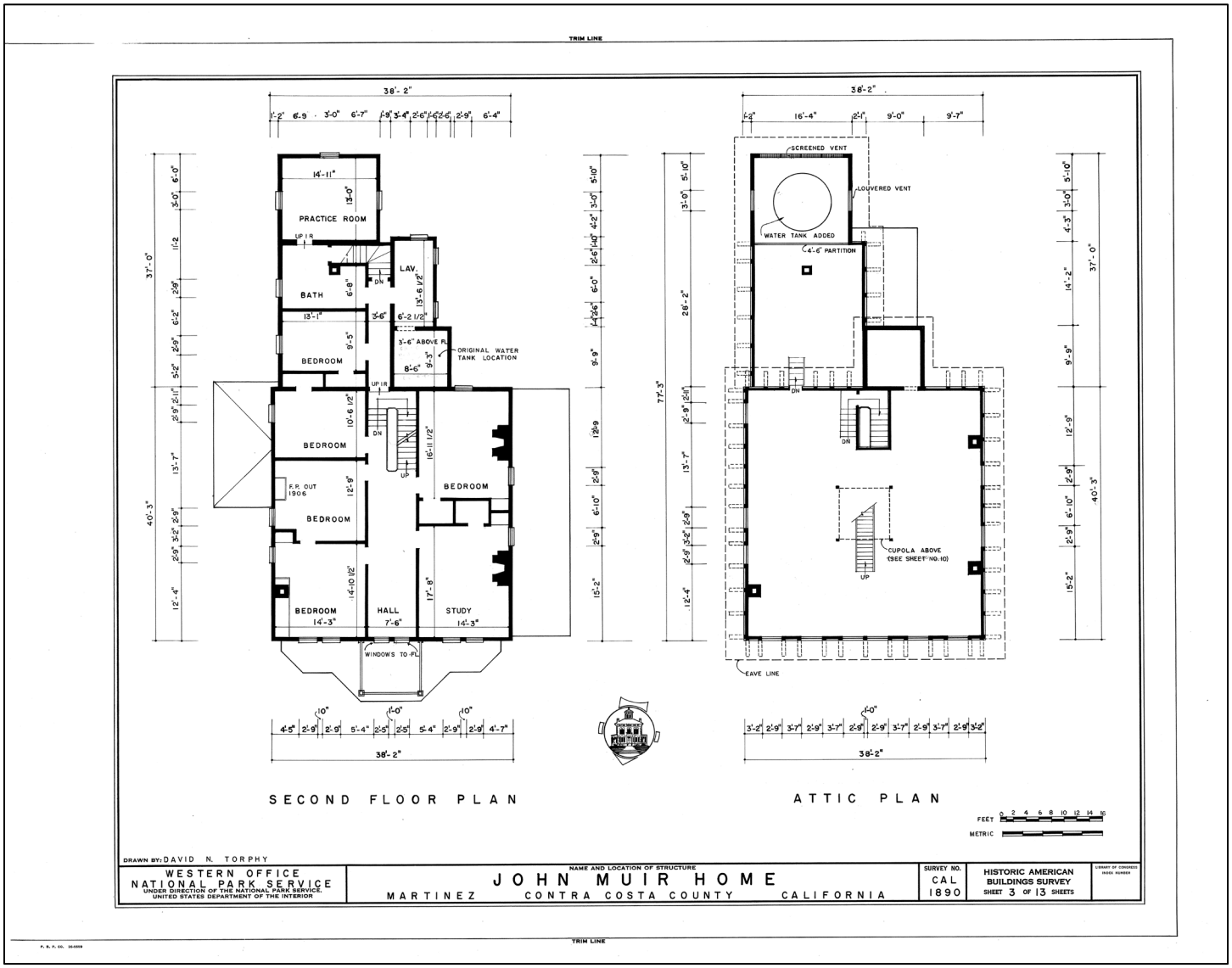


Figure 6: Strentzel-Muir House floor plan, second floor and attic. Historic American Buildings Survey Collection, HABS CA-1890.

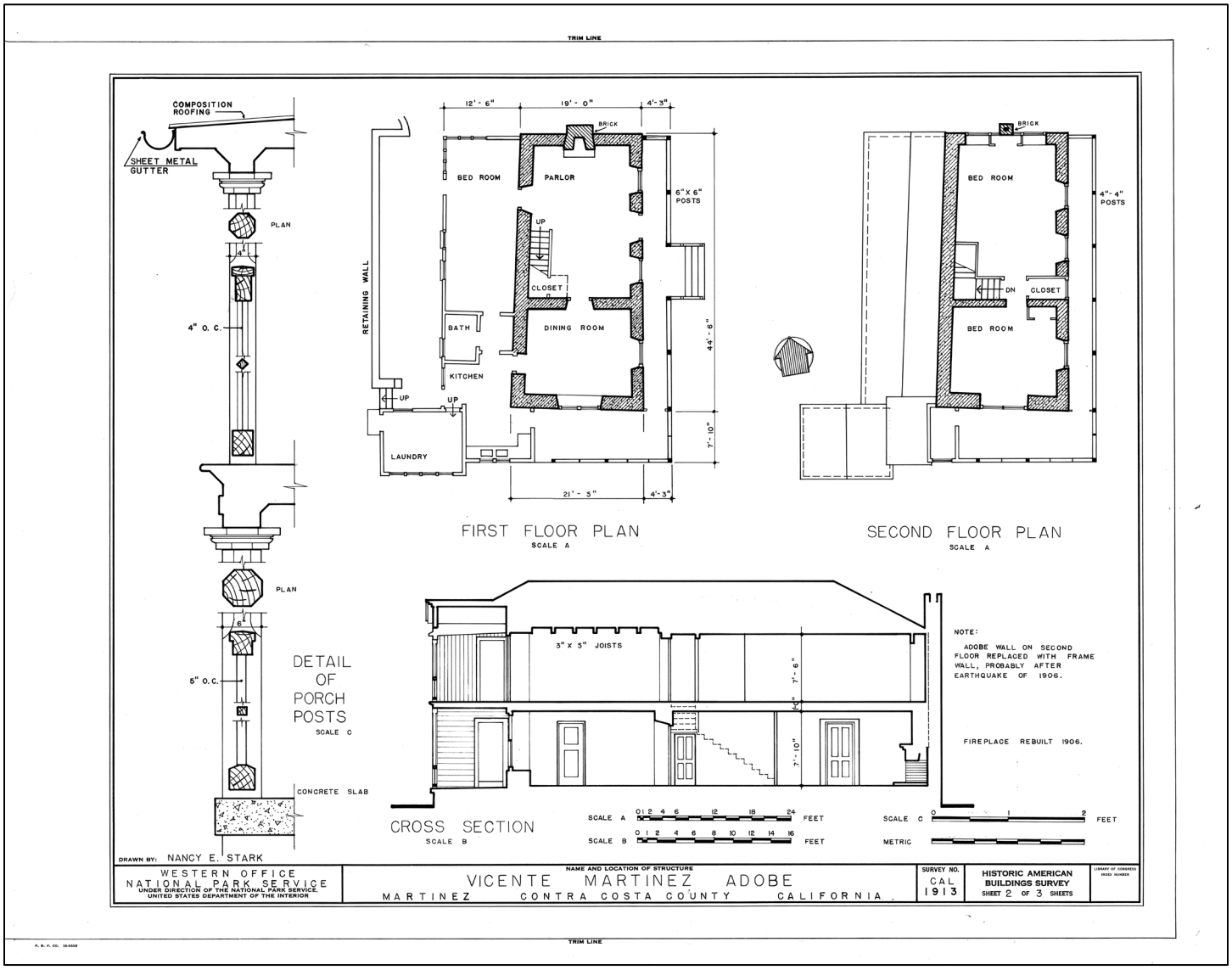


Figure 7: Martinez Adobe floor plan, cross section, and detail of porch posts. Historic American Buildings Survey Collection, HABS CA-1913.



Figure 8: Dr. John Strentzel at Redfern Place with the Main Farm Road, Windmill, and Martinez Adobe visible, 1880s. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 D6-1.



Figure 9: Wanda and Helen Muir standing near a barn and corral at the Martinez Adobe, late 1880s. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 A-16.



Figure 10: Strentzel-Muir House, ca. 1890. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 1729.

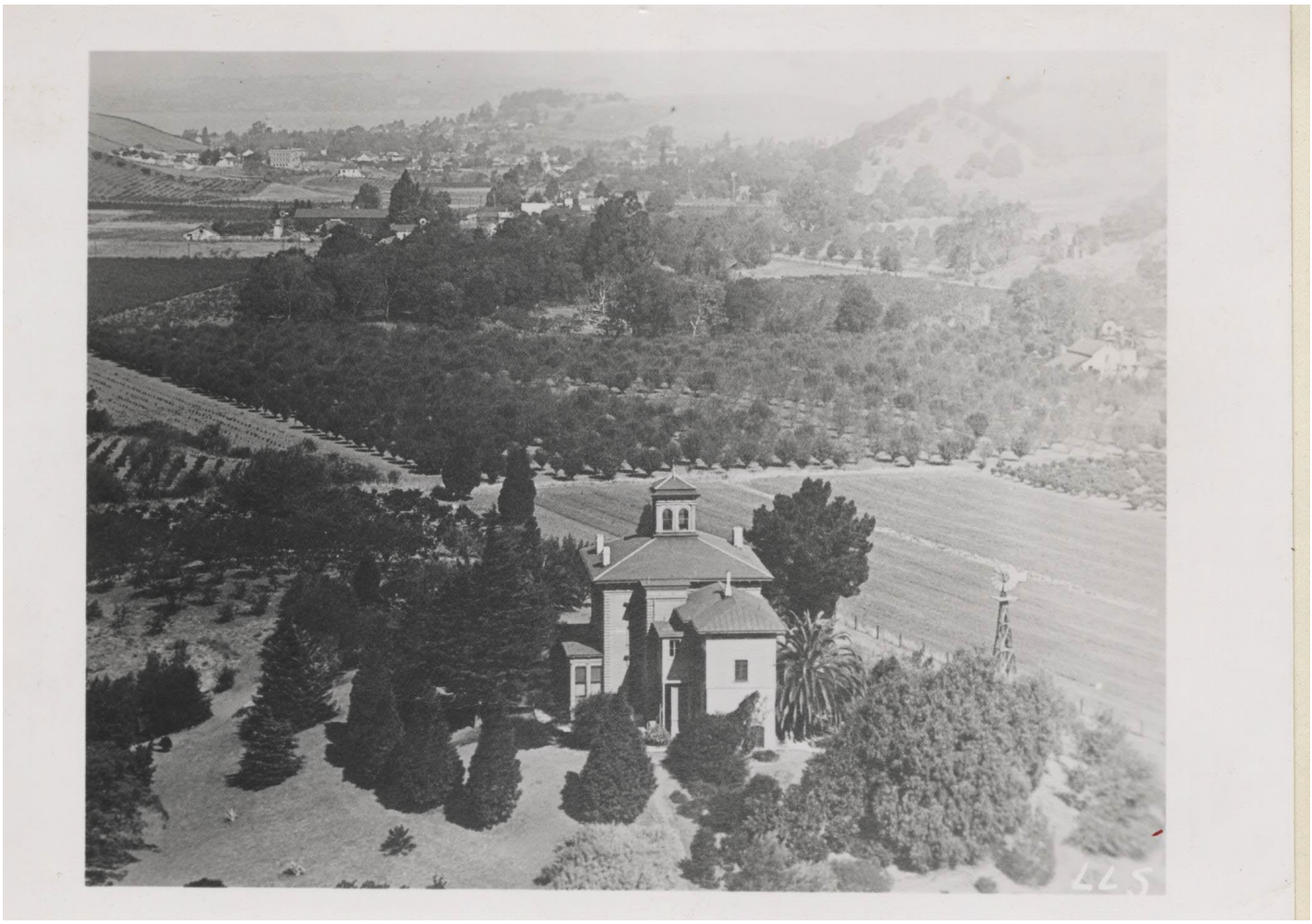


Figure 11: Overhead view of the Strentzel-Muir House and vicinity, ca. 1900, camera facing north. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 A1-15.



Figure 12: From left to right: Wanda, Helen, Louie, and John Muir, with their family dog Keeney. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 1732.



Figure 13: Strentzel and John Hanna (Wanda and Tom Hanna's children) in front of the Martinez Adobe, ca. 1912-1913. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 B1-39.



Figure 14: John Muir commemoration at his gravesite, ca. 1935. The eucalyptus is still present at the site. Courtesy of John Muir National Historic Site, JOMU 4880 H1-99.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Strentzel-Muir Ranch
City or Vicinity:	Martinez
State:	CA
Name of Photographer:	As indicated
Date of Photographs:	As indicated
Location of Digital Files:	National Park Service, Interior Regions 8, 9, 10 & 12
Number of Photographs:	31

Photo 1: Strentzel-Muir House, front (north) elevation. Note the two California fan palms framing the entrance. Camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 2: Strentzel-Muir House, east elevation. Camera facing west. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 3: Strentzel-Muir House, south (rear) elevation. The south wing addition was constructed by Muir soon after moving into the house in 1890. Note the mature Mexican fan palm next to the house. Camera facing north. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 4: Strentzel-Muir House conservatory, camera facing west. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 5: Strentzel-Muir House, west patio railing, camera facing southeast. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 6: John's Muir's scribble den on the second floor of the Strentzel-Muir House. His original writing desk is situated under the window. Camera facing north. Virginia Bones, April 30, 2021.

Photo 7: Fireplace on the second floor of the Strentzel-Muir House, built in 1906 after the San Francisco earthquake. Note the petrified wood insert, which John obtained during his travels in northern Arizona after Louie's death in 1905. Camera facing east. Virginia Bones, April 30, 2021.

Photo 8: Water tank in the attic addition constructed by John Muir in 1890, camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 9: Strentzel-Muir House walkway with curbs on the northeast corner of the house, camera facing northwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 10: Carriage Drive Loop leading to the Strentzel-Muir House. A large California bay is on the left of the path and incense cedar trees are on the right, camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 11: View toward the east elevation of the Strentzel-Muir House from the east bank of Franklin Creek. Vineyards and orchards are in the foreground. Muir's giant sequoia is on the left. The house is situated on a 30' knoll and screened by various specimen trees. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 12: Carriage House, south (front) and east elevations, camera facing northwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 13: Carriage House, north (rear) and east elevations. Note the brick pier foundation. Camera facing west

southwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 14: Carriage House and giant sequoia viewed from the two-track dirt section of the Woodshed Road, camera facing northwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 15: Rear view of the Carriage House from the site of the former fishpond. A non-contributing windmill is in the foreground. The Strentzel-Muir House is partially visible behind the trees growing on the knoll on the left side of the image, camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 16: Carriage House interior. Note the differing stain patterns on the exposed roof skip sheathing. Camera facing southwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 17: Franklin Creek within the House Site, camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 18: Martinez Adobe, east (front) elevation, camera facing west. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 19: Martinez Adobe, east (front) and south elevations. Note the rear additions and the wrap-around two-story veranda. Camera facing northwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 20: Martinez Adobe, north elevation. The chimney and fireplace were added by Tom Hanna after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 21: Oak woodland along the Mount Wanda Fire Road, camera facing north. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 22: Mount Wanda grasses and oak woodland, camera facing east. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 23: View from Mount Wanda to Mount Helen with Mount Diablo in the distance, camera facing southeast. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 24: View from Mount Helen across the Strentzel Creek drainage. The light-colored trees on the ridge in the middle ground comprise part of the historic olive orchard. Camera facing south. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 25: Mount Wanda olive orchard, camera facing east. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 26: Mount Wanda olive orchard with historic rows and spacing evident, camera facing east. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 27: Gravestones at the Strentzel-Muir Gravesite. John and Louie Muir's gravestones are the two in the front. John Strentzel's burial spot is marked by the larger obelisk which also includes the names of Louisiana Strentzel and their son John Erwin who died as a child in 1857. Camera facing northeast. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 28: John Muir's gravestone and inscription, camera facing east. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 29: Mature eucalyptus under which John Muir's funeral service was reportedly held, camera facing southwest. Christopher E. Johnson, April 9, 2018.

Photo 30: Strentzel-Muir Gravesite pear orchard, camera facing west. Trevor Rice, April 9, 2021.

Photo 31: Walkway, bench, and interpretive sign at the Strentzel-Muir burial plot, camera facing northeast. Trevor Rice, April 9, 2021.



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