

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Tribute To Muir

"John Muir, Naturalist," a concise biography published by the Contra Costa County Historical Society, and John Muir Assn., has arrived at my desk. The purpose of the publication is to arouse interest in preserving the stately old Muir Home in Alhambra Valley, Martinez. It is now on the study list of the National Park Service for recommendation as a National Monument. John Muir, world famous naturalist, has been called "the father of our national parks and forest reservations."

The biography was written by the Rev. John. W. Winkley of Walnut Creek and published by the Parthenon Press of Nashville, Tenn.

William E. Colby of Big Sur wrote the foreword for this very excellent book on the life of John Muir.

"John Muir, Scotch-born, Wisconsin-bred, made Yosemite Valley and then Alhambra Valley his home for the last years of his life. It took this foreign-born prophet to recognize that unless something was done before it was too late, much of the glory of the natural scene of the West would be mutilated and destroyed.

"He led the way and through his inspired writings influenced others to aid him in his work for the preservation, so that now much of his "pure wildness" is reasonable safe.

"It is most fitting that the home of this great man in Alhambra Valley should be restored and preserved to honor him. It will serve as a shrine to attract and inspire his disciples to continue his brave and effective battle for conservation."

Colby, an intimate friend of Muir and co-founder with him of the Sierra Club, writes: "You have caught and presented the spirit of the wonderful human being that Muir was —" Dr. Clark Kerr, University of California president, also wrote to the author, ". . . so readable and informative — I wish you every success ... in creating a Muir National Park."

Not only is there interest in a John Muir National Park and the preservation of the John Muir home in Martinez, but there is a drive on in Contra Costa County to build a hospital in his memory. The hospital will be constructed on 10 acres on Ygnacio Valley road about one and one-half miles west of Walnut Creek.

The board of trustees of the John Muir Memorial Hospital announced recently a Contra Costa County fund drive has raised the \$1.4 million for 150-bed community hospital. The final \$300,000 needed to qualify for a federal Hill-Burton grant has been pledged.

John Muir lived in Contra Costa County and the city of Martinez for 34 years, about half of his life. Here he raised his family, and here he wrote many of his famous magazine articles and books, classics in the nature literature of the world. Here the great of the earth made a path to his door.

The old John Muir house on the hill stands lonely, shabby, ghostly, among unkempt remnants of his world-gathered ornamental trees and shrubs. His grave is in a little private cemetery at the end of a dusty orchard lane. The world will not forget John Muir. The new biography ends: "We may be judged for our neglect. Let us, his City, County, State, build a fitting Memorial to his name."