Finding Aid to the John Muir Correspondence, 1856-1914

Finding aid written by Mary Elings, Archivist for Digital Collections, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley and Shan Sutton, Head of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library

The John Muir Correspondence digitization project was funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720-6000
Phone: (510) 642-6481
Fax: (510) 642-7589
Email: bancref@library.berkeley.edu
URL: http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/
© 2009

The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved.
Finding Aid to the John Muir Correspondence, 1856-1914

Collection number: various

The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720-6000
Phone: (510) 642-6481
Fax: (510) 642-7589
Email: bancref@library.berkeley.edu
URL: http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/

The John Muir Correspondence digitization project was funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

Finding Aid Author(s):
Finding aid written by Mary Elings, Archivist for Digital Collections, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley and Shan Sutton, Head of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library

Date Completed:
June 2009

Finding Aid Encoded By:
GenX

© 2011 The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved.

Collection Summary

Collection Title: John Muir Correspondence
Date (inclusive): 1856-1914
Collection Number: various
Creator: Muir, John
Extent: 22 reels of microfilm containing 6581 letters. 6581 digital objects.
Repository: The Bancroft Library.
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720-6000
Phone: (510) 642-6481
Fax: (510) 642-7589
Email: bancref@library.berkeley.edu
URL: http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/

Abstract: This collection consists of digital images of the correspondence of John Muir from 1856-1914. The vast majority of the letters were sent and received by Muir, although the collection also includes some correspondence of selected family members and colleagues. Muir's correspondence offers a unique first-hand perspective on his thoughts and experiences, as well as those of his correspondents, which include many notable figures in scientific, literary, and political circles of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The correspondence forms part of the John Muir Papers microfilm set that filmed letters located at over 35 institutions.

Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Access Information
Collection is open for research.

Conditions of Use
Some of the materials in the John Muir Correspondence Collection may be protected by the U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) and/or by the copyright or neighboring rights laws of other nations. Additionally, the reproduction of some materials may be restricted by privacy or publicity rights. Responsibility for making an independent legal assessment of an item and securing any necessary permissions ultimately rests with persons desiring to reproduce or use the item.
The owning institutions encourage use of these materials under the fair use clause of the 1976 copyright act. For the purposes of research, teaching, and private study, you may reproduce (print, make photocopies, or download) materials from this collection without prior permission of the owning institution, on the condition that proper attribution of the source is provided in all copies.

For other uses of materials (e.g., commercial products, publication, broadcast, and other reproductions not considered "fair use"), requests for permission must be submitted in writing to the owning institution. Permission for publication or other use is given on behalf of each institution as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained. Contact the owning institution, identified in the "Publisher" field of the description of the item.

The unpublished works of John Muir are copyrighted by the Muir-Hanna Trust. To purchase copies of images and/or obtain permission to publish or exhibit them, see http://library.pacific.edu/ha/forms.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], John Muir Correspondence, various, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Alternative Form of Materials Available
Full collection is available on microfilm as part of the John Muir Papers.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog
Muir, John, 1838-1914
Conservation of natural resources--United States--History--Sources
Conservationists--United States
Natural history--United States--History--Sources
Naturalists--United States
United States--Description and travel--Views

Administrative Information
Processed by Bancroft staff.

Biography/Organization History
A Scottish-born journalist and naturalist, John Muir (1838-1914) studied botany and geology at the University of Wisconsin (1861-1863). He worked for awhile as a mill hand at the Trout Broom Factory in Meaford, Canada (1864-1866), then at an Indianapolis carriage factory (1866-1867), until an accident temporarily blinded him and directed his thoughts toward full-time nature study. Striking out on foot for South America, Muir walked to the Gulf of Mexico (September 1867-January 1868), but a long illness in Florida led him to change his plans and turn his interests westward. Muir arrived by ship at San Francisco (March 1868), walked to the Sierra Nevada Mountains and began a five year wilderness sojourn (1868-1873) during which he made his year-round home in the Yosemite Valley. Working as a sheepherder and lumberman when he needed money for supplies, Muir investigated the length and breadth of the Sierra range, focusing most of his attention on glaciation and its impact on mountain topography. He began to publish newspaper articles about what he saw in the California mountains and these articles brought him to the attention of such intellectuals as Asa Gray and Ralph Waldo Emerson, both of whom sought him out during their visits to California. Encouraged by Jeanne Carr, wife of his one-time botany professor, Ezra S. Carr, Muir took up nature writing as a profession (1872). He set up winter headquarters in Oakland and began a pattern of spring and summer mountaineering followed by winter writing based upon his travel journals that he held to until 1880. His treks took him to Mount Shasta (1874, 1875 & 1877), the Great Basin (1876, 1877, 1878), southern California and the Coast Range (1877), and southern Alaska (1879). Muir found that he could finance his modest bachelor lifestyle with revenue from contributions published in various San Francisco newspapers and magazines. During this period he launched the first lobbying effort to protect Sierra forests from wasteful lumbering practices (1876).

In 1880 he married Louisa Strentzel, daughter of a prominent physician and horticulturist in Martinez, Calif. Quickly learning the fruit business, Muir soon found himself caught up in the full-time management of his father-in-law's orchard properties. Two daughters (Annie Wanda, b. 1881 and Helen Lillian, b. 1886) added to his domestic responsibilities. His writing diminished both in quantity and quality during this decade, with only one lengthy project completed (Picturesque California, 1888).

Prompted by the persistent urging of Robert Underwood Johnson, an editor of Century Magazine, and freed from many business obligations by his father-in-law's death and the subsequent sale of much of Strentzel's property by Louisa Strentzel Muir, John Muir launched a major writing and lobbying campaign that culminated in the creation of Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant National Parks (1890). He also helped found the Sierra Club (1892) and used its collective

Finding Aid to the John Muir Correspondence, 1856-1914
various

3
influence to protect the boundaries of Yosemite (1895) from lumber interests. During the 1890s Muir again began to travel, visiting Alaska, 1890; Europe, 1893; Arizona & Oregon, 1896; Canada & Alaska, 1897, 1899; the Midwest and New England, 1898) and also published his first important book, The Mountains of California (1894).

During Muir’s final fourteen years, he was hounded by a variety of family difficulties and political failures that probably hastened his death. Louisa, Muir’s wife, died in 1905. In the same year his younger daughter, Helen, contracted tuberculosis and Muir shepherded the young woman to various spas ultimately settling her at Daggett in the Mojave Desert (1905). Meanwhile, the naturalist found himself at odds with “utilitarian” conservationists like Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, who were less interested in the preservation of wilderness than in the controlled “harvesting” of forest resources. Pinchot also favored conversion of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to a reservoir for the city of San Francisco, an idea which ultimately became a reality despite Muir’s dogged opposition (1908-1913). Still, John Muir found time and energy both for travel and for writing. In 1903 he ushered President Theodore Roosevelt up Half Dome, then shortly afterward took a year’s voyage around the world (1903-1904). In 1906 Muir spent much time with daughter Helen in Arizona, the following year he summered in the Hetch Hetchy with California painter, William Keith and in 1909 visited the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River with John Burroughs and E.H. Harriman. His most extended trip during these years was a six month tour of South America and Africa (1911-1912). Muir somehow found time during the same years to publish Stickeen (1908), My First Summer in the Sierra (1910) and The Yosemite (1912).

Scope and Content Note
This collection consists of the correspondence of John Muir from 1856-1914. The vast majority of the letters were sent and received by Muir, although the collection also includes some correspondence of selected family members and colleagues. Muir’s correspondence offers a unique first-hand perspective on his thoughts and experiences, as well as those of his correspondents, which include many notable figures in scientific, literary, and political circles of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The correspondence forms part of the John Muir Papers microfilm set that includes letters that are located at over 35 institutions. In this digital collection the “owning institution” of the original letters is indicated on each image and in its metadata. Muir correspondence that was acquired after the microfilm was created in 1986 is not currently included in this digital collection, although it may be added at a later date.
Finding Aid to the John Muir Correspondence, 1856-1914

Reel 15

Reel 16

Reel 17

Reel 18

Reel 19

Reel 20

Reel 21

Reel 22