

JOHN MUIR'S HOMAGE
TO HENRY DAVID THOREAU*



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Though John Muir never met Henry David Thoreau in person, he was indebted to him as his spiritual and literary mentor. The closest their paths came to crossing came in the spring of 1861. Thoreau travelled to Minnesota via the Mississippi River from East Dubuque, Illinois, past Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, to Fountain City, Wisconsin, and St. Paul, Minnesota. He took the trip in vain effort to improve his ailing lungs and, as Walter Harding notes, to study American Indian cultures and American flora and fauna.¹ Thoreau's return trip took him in late June, 1861, back to Prairie du Chien and by rail to Milwaukee and a Great Lakes passage to upstate New York.

During this same period, from May to June, 1861, John Muir had left the University of Wisconsin in Madison to return home for his summer holidays at the Muir farm at Hickory Hill not far from Portage, Wisconsin. I suppose Thoreau and Muir were but fifty miles apart when Thoreau rode the train from Prairie du Chien to Milwaukee on June 26, 1861. By this time Muir had certainly heard of Thoreau but it was not until 1862, the year of Thoreau's death, that Muir became acquainted with the writings of Thoreau and Emerson at the home of his geology professor, Ezra Slocum Carr. According to Linnie Marsh Wolfe, Muir was led to read Emerson's essays "The American Scholar" and "Nature." Also on the professor's shelves were, in all probability, a copy of *Walden* and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Mrs. Carr quite frequently discussed the writings of Emerson and Thoreau with young John Muir.

While Muir was barely beginning his career in 1861, Thoreau was ending his. As a result of his Minnesota journey, Thoreau further revised his lecture "Wild Apples" (which was finally published the year of his death), and he took more notes on Indian cultures based upon his brief visit to the Lower Sioux Agency at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota. Thoreau

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had completed, as best he could, his Indian education which began in 1847 at Walden Pond when he commenced his "Indian Notebook" project and first visited the Maine woods which afforded him the unique opportunity of becoming friends with Penobscot Indians. This education continued through the 1850s until his Minnesota journey in 1861. A dying Henry Thoreau was able to see his first Indian dances, including a Sioux Dream Dance.² Though his notes are sparse, one can only assume that these people deeply touched Thoreau's spirit. For Thoreau, the Indian was a key to understanding North America. Another important event for Thoreau occurred on June 11, 1861, when he discovered a wild crab tree growing along the shores of Lake Calhoun, just west of Minneapolis; the discovery was indeed joyous, and it tinges his essay "Wild Apples" which may very well have inspired John Muir to write thirteen years later a similar essay celebrating wild nature entitled "Wild Wool." Wildness is the central theme of both Thoreau and Muir, and fascination for aboriginal cultures in the wild certainly constitutes part of this theme.

If one closely examines the published writings of John Muir, including *John of the Mountains*, edited by Linnie Marsh Wolfe in 1938 nearly a quarter of a century after Muir's death, he will find frequent direct and indirect allusions to Henry David Thoreau. From Thoreau, who seemed to inspire Muir more than any other individual writer including Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Ruskin or Emerson, one finds a great number of images of spring and resurrection, dawn, the rising sun, crowing cocks, eyes of landscape, and transcendent herons and frogs, as well as allusions to the mythic Ganges, "higher laws," and the need for the wild. Thoreau's rich experience of living in nature and visiting the wilderness of Maine made him more important, I believe, than Ralph Waldo Emerson. It must be added that all influences, as inspiring as they may be, are transcended; Muir created his own rich metaphysical imagery from his unique mind's eye.

Muir did not start producing books (except for contributing to *Picturesque California* in 1887) until he was in his late fifties, his first being *The Mountains of California* (1894). Of course he had written a number of articles for *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and other journals while he resided at the home of John and Mary Swett in San Francisco in the 1870s after his Yosemite days. As a rule, in Muir's writing the later in life, the more John Muir was a student of Henry Thoreau, as we shall see. Between 1894 and the year of his death, 1914, Muir published or worked on *Our National Parks* (1901), *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911), *Yosemite* (1912), *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* and *A Thousand-Mile Walk* (1913), and *Travels in Alaska* (1915). William Frederic Badè collected and edited various articles to produce Muir's *The Cruise of the Corwin* (1918), *Steep Trails* (1918) and two volumes of *Life and Letters* (1923). Yet-to-be-published works coming from Muir's late years are his aphorisms, autobiography, and a mountaineering book. (My selection of his mountaineering essays is now available.) All of these works demonstrate a connection with Thoreau.

From Linnie Marsh Wolfe and William Frederic Badè we know that Muir was encouraged to put his thoughts in writing by several people, including Mrs. Ezra Slocum Carr, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Underwood Johnson and Muir's own wife, Louie. His ardent desire to experience nature world-wide firsthand and to become involved in the struggle to preserve the wilderness in a national park system both fostered and hampered his writing career, as did his simultaneous efforts to be a good husband, father, and provider. Direct experience, as Thoreau suggested, is essential to the growth of a writer. Involvement in conservation battles gave Muir ideal subject matter, and his wife and two daughters gave him necessary diversion and support. On the other hand, he

resisted writing polished books because they took him *away from* his beloved wilderness. Writing was a painful task for him; he was a revisionist par excellence, going through multiple drafts and searching always for “le seule mot juste.” Of course he relied heavily on the word “glorious” as Herbert Gleason pointed out to him. Gleason, who was Muir’s and Thoreau’s photographic illustrator, wrote on June 20, 1912, “I hope you will go on with your glorious writing, describing glorious scenes of California’s glorious mountains and glorious parks and glorious forests and glorious water-falls, just as long and just as GLORIOUSLY as you can.”³ But Muir more than made up for this weakness by creating some of the most exciting prose (“A Perilous Night on Shasta’s Summit” and “Stickeen”), the most metaphysical imagery (the *aurora borealis* of *Travels in Alaska*), and the most philosophical aphorisms (yet to be published) in American literature.

John Muir’s battles and struggles for conserving Yosemite and the Hetch Hetchy drained him of all his spiritual energies, as Stephen Fox so well describes in his recent book *John Muir and His Legacy*. For Muir to have been able to write such forceful essays as “The American Forests” in *Our National Parks* is more than a tribute to his miraculous reserve strength. Duties at his ranch in Martinez, such as raising fruit crops and preserving them for shipment, occupied much of his energies during the 1880s. Then responsibilities were borne out of devotion to his beloved wife and daughters. Louie, the ideal wife for John Muir, sensed when his energies were drained and insisted that he go off to the wilderness of Mount Rainier or Alaska to renew his spirit and mind. Between excursions to the wild from 1894 to 1914, Muir was busy in his “scribble den” at Martinez where he wrote seven books for publication and countless thousands of letters, notes, journal entries, essays, aphorisms, and an autobiography which largely became incorporated in *Boyhood and Youth* and *Travels in Alaska*. One need only look at the index of unpublished materials at the Holt-Atherton Center in Stockton, California, to see that Muir’s writing activities were phenomenal.

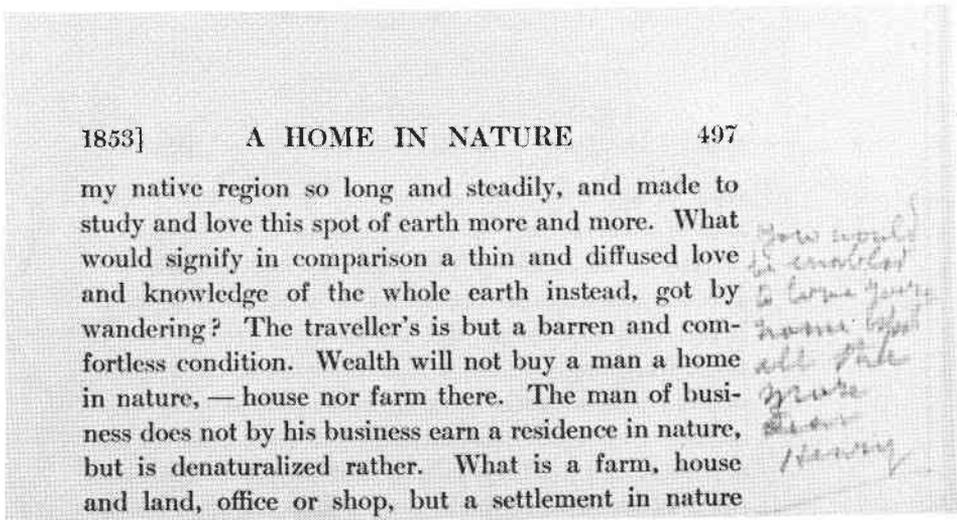


Courtesy of Phyllis Shaw

John Muir's scribble den today as interpreted by the National Park Service. From the window of his den, located on the second floor of his hilltop home in Martinez, California, Muir could look out over his orchards to rolling hills of the Alhambra Valley.

With the exception of *The Mountains of California* and *Our National Parks*, it can be argued that all of Muir's books were written under the influence of Henry David Thoreau. In 1906 John Muir wrote to Herbert Gleason to ask him to request Houghton Mifflin to send to Martinez the twenty volume Riverside set of the writings of Henry David Thoreau. Finally in 1907 the set was delivered to Muir, who proceeded to read it voraciously. Muir, of course, had already read *Walden* (probably at Madison in 1862) and *The Maine Woods* by 1870 (he refers to it in a letter to Mrs. Ezra S. Carr dated May 29, 1870). Muir dedicated himself to twenty years of writing and in the process felt he needed a philosophical and literary guide. Henry Thoreau was his answer.⁴

What does one find in examining John Muir's personal set of the writings of Henry David Thoreau? The most obvious thing is a handwritten index at the back of each volume. At the back of volume three, *The Maine Woods*, for instance, Muir has penciled in various topics of interest with page references. Such topics include: wolves, owls, camp fire, literature, fish, mountaineering, mountain tops, trees, moose, motives that carry men into the wilderness, Indians, glacial rocks, and instinct. If one goes to the text of each of the volumes, he will find underlinings, vertical lines, and occasional marginalia consisting of Muir's reaction to Thoreau. All of these markings give us a clear indication that John Muir carefully read Henry Thoreau cover to cover. For the



Muir Library Collection, UOP

Muir's handwritten note next to Thoreau's journal entry for November 12, 1853.

most part, Muir was an enthusiastic sympathizer, but on a few occasions he got his "Scottish" up and chastized Thoreau in the margins. Next to Thoreau's journal entry for November 12, 1853, there is one such reaction. Thoreau writes, "I cannot but regard it as a kindness in those who have the steering of me that, by want of pecuniary wealth, I have been nailed down to this my native region so long and steadily, and made to study and love this spot of earth more and more. What would signify in comparison a thin and diffused love and knowledge of the whole earth instead, got by wandering. The traveller's is but a barren and comfortless condition." And Muir: "You would be enabled to love your home spot all the more, Dear Henry." Thoreau's journal entry for January

6, 1857 goes: "Do you think that Concord River would have continued to flow these millions of years by Clamshell Hill and round Hunt's Island, if it had not been happy . . .," and Muir comments, "It didn't. It is a young river and so are the hills and islands." In volume five, *Excursions and Poems*, containing the essay "A Winter Walk" Muir writes "No" beside Thoreau's two sentences "The day is but a Scandinavian night. The winter is an arctic summer."

Muir's dialogue with Thoreau continues into his notes and fragments. In an unpublished fragment written approximately in 1910, Muir takes issue with Thoreau's essay "Walking" (1862): "Take a walk saunter off make no fuss about it. Do not as Thoreau advises first make your will . . . such self-conscious sacrificing preparation would render you unfit for a walk in good wilderness."⁵ Of course Thoreau, I believe, was being ironic when he wrote, "If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again, — if you have paid your debts, and made your will, settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk."⁶

Nonetheless, Muir was for the most part deeply inspired by Thoreau's writings. Around 1910 Muir began to arrange his philosophical thoughts or aphorisms around peculiarly Thoreauvian topics, including philanthropy, solitude, sounds, spring, winter, and on truly doing good. In these typed aphorisms Muir frequently alludes to or quotes Thoreau. Muir writes, "Camping on Monadnock, Thoreau and his companion, when they go to the top of the mountain, were welcomed by rain, so they said that the fatted cloud had been killed for them, and every bush dripped tears of joy at their advent." Alluding to Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," Muir creates an aphorism of his own: "There are nine hundred and ninety-nine patterns [not patrons] of virtue to one virtuous man." Quoting Thoreau, Muir writes: "Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated by mankind. Nay! it is greatly overrated." And again "Thoreau says that when he shut the door on his cat's tail the caterwaul drove two worlds out of his mind." On the same typed page of Muir's manuscript come the words "Thoreau says — 'I had rather keep bachelor's hall in hell than board in heaven.' But there is no book telling us how to get an honest living in the wilderness."⁷ Many more examples of a Thoreauvian Muir could be cited from his unpublished writings, but suffice it to say that there is strong evidence that Thoreau deeply influenced Muir during the time when Muir was most literarily productive.

Muir's *The Mountains of California* (1894), though it does not have any direct citations from the writings of Thoreau, abounds in Thoreauvian language and imagery. Muir was familiar with both *Walden* and *The Maine Woods* while he was writing *The Mountains of California*. We know from Samuel Young that Muir took a volume of Thoreau to Alaska in 1879.⁸ My guess is that it was the 1864 edition of *The Maine Woods*, a book which in many ways parallels Muir's *Travels in Alaska*; both are based on three excursions to the wilderness, and both involve a growing awareness and appreciation of Indian cultures. To some extent the social concern for Arctic cultures expressed in *The Cruise of the Corwin* parallels Thoreau's concern over the cheap commercialization by lumber industries of the Penobscots. Traders in the Arctic had the same effect on the Eskimos, to the native's disadvantage and even death. Some of the language of *Mountains* suggests shades of Thoreau's *Maine Woods*. Muir writes that the Sierra is a "delightfully divine place to die in."⁹ Thoreau exclaims in *The Maine Woods*, "What a place to live, what a place to die and be buried in."¹⁰

Walden and particularly the chapter "Spring" are most assuredly echoed in *Mountains*.

Muir's springtime imagery is characterized by the use of the resurrection symbol. And yet as Thoreauvian as this imagery is, it must at the same time be considered Biblically pure Muir. Spring, in *Mountains*, is called the "annual resurrection." Grasses of a hemlock grove await "summer resurrection." And after a forest fire, "Then a young grove immediately springs up," writes Muir, "giving beauty for ashes."¹¹ Thoreau's image of cheerful cock crowing found throughout *Walden* is seen from time to time in Muir's writings. In *Mountains* the water ouzel is an eternal creature of spring: "Never shall you hear anything wintery from his warm breast . . . as free from dejection as a cock crowing."¹² For both Muir and Thoreau cyclic Nature is a perpetual source of living mythology. The coming of spring out of winter, the changing color of leaves, the raging storms at sea, and the grinding action of glaciers are indeed examples of a mythology in which the gods (God) are (is) at work.

Our National Parks (1901) quotes from or paraphrases Thoreau in several instances. Muir writes in "Wild Gardens of the Yosemite Park," regarding the benefits of tree climbing, "Thoreau says: 'I found my account in climbing a tree once. It was a tall white pine, on the top of a hill; and though I got well pitched, I was well paid for it, for I discovered new mountains in the horizon which I had never seen before. I might have walked about the foot of the tree for three score years and ten, and yet I certainly should never have seen them. But, above all, I discovered around me, — it was near the middle of June, — on the ends of the top most branches, a few minute and delicate red conelike blossoms, the fertile flower of the white pine looking heavenward. I carried straight way to the village the topmost spire, and showed it to stranger jurymen who walked the streets, — for it was court week, — and to farmers and lumbermen and woodchoppers and hunters, and not one had ever seen the like before, but they wondered as at a star dropped down.'"¹³ Muir effectively ties Thoreau's quote into his own commentary on the times by noting that the "same marvelous blindness" prevails in California.

In "The American Forests," a diatribe against the foolish government support of lumber interests, Muir invokes the name of Thoreau once again: "Travelers through the West in summer are not likely to forget the firework display along the various railway tracks. Thoreau, when contemplating the destruction of the forests on the east side of the continent, said that soon the country would be so bald that every man would have to grow whiskers to hide its nakedness, but he thanked God that at least the sky was safe. Had he gone West he would have found out that the sky was not safe; for all through the summer months, over most of the mountain regions, the smoke of mill and forest fires is so thick and black that no sunbeam can pierce it."¹⁴

The government, Muir maintained, must step in to protect trees, God's gift to humanity. As Thoreau is critical of the misuse of trees in Maine ("Think how stood the white-pine tree on the shore of Chesuncook, its branches soughing with the four winds, and every individual needle trembling in the sunlight, — think how it stands with it now, — sold, perchance, to the New England Friction-Match Company!"¹⁵), Muir lashes out with equally strong irony: "The laborious vandals had seen 'the biggest tree in the world,' then forsooth, they must try to see the biggest stump and dance on it."¹⁶ The most significant part of the destruction of the wilderness is not necessarily of the trees but of the people of wilderness, the American Indians. Nothing is worse for Thoreau and Muir than a *degraded* Indian. Thoreau writes in *The Maine Woods* that "There is, in fact, a remarkable and unexpected resemblance between the degraded savage and the lowest classes in a great city. The one is no more a child of nature than the other."¹⁷ Muir was equally perturbed concerning some of the Indians of the California mountains:

“[P]resently the English-speaking shepherd came in, to whom I explained my wants and what I was doing. Like most white men, he could not conceive how anything other than gold could be the object of such rambles as mine, and asked repeatedly whether I had discovered any mines. I tried to make him talk about trees and the wild animals, but unfortunately he proved to be a tame Indian from the Tule Reservation, had been to school, claimed to be civilized, and spoke contemptuously of ‘Wild Indians,’ and so of course his inherited instincts were blurred or lost.”¹⁸ The very thing Muir sought in the wilderness this Indian had lost. As Roy Harvey Pearce points out in his book *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization*, it was not that primitivists like Thoreau and Muir wanted to do away with civilization, but that civilized men should have the integrity of the Indian.

The fate of the entire human race is at stake when civilization so effectively numbs us into humble submission and dulls our inherent need for the wild. Stephen Fox in his recent book, *John Muir and His Legacy*, asks why John Muir endangered himself to climb the rugged Sierra. Fox believes that “what he found was a degree of psychic integration previously unknown to him.”¹⁹ No wonder he was so dismayed by a tame Indian who had lost what he sought. But civilized townsmen did not even know what they had lost! Near the beginning of *Walden* Thoreau observes, “I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born?”²⁰ At the outset of *Our National Parks* Muir also stresses the importance of being “suckled by a wolf”: “Few in these hot, dim, strenuous times are quite sane or free; chokes with care like clocks full of dust, laboriously doing so much good and making so much money — or so little, — they are no longer good for themselves.” But, continues Muir, “When, like a merchant taking a list of his goods, we take stock of our wilderness, we are glad to see how much of even the most destructible kind is still unsoiled.”²¹ To visit Yellowstone or Yosemite is to be resurrected. Thoreau believed that each town should have a wild grove of woods for its inhabitants to wander in so that they might not go mad. Muir not only believed that wild parks are necessary but he fought to establish Yosemite National Park and a national park system.

John Muir’s next book, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, was produced four years after he had received the twenty volume set of Thoreau’s writings. In this book, based upon his 1869 journal, we can find richly subtle and sublimated Thoreauvian imagery indicating that Muir was not an imitator but an integrator. As Muir’s volume of *Walden* is heavily marked — pencil markings abound along side of Thoreau’s description of dawn, morning, and spring — and in *My First Summer in the Sierra* Muir also draws our attention to the importance of dawn. He writes, “[O]ne feels inclined to shout lustily on rising in the morning like a crowing cock.”²² A bit later Muir reiterates the spiritual significance of dawn: “How deathlike is sleep in this morning air, and quick the awakening into newness of life! A calm dawn, yellow and purple, then floods on sun-gold, making everything tingle and glow.”²³ One cannot help but think of Thoreau’s butterfly at the end of *Walden*, which gnaws its way out of its cocoon deep in the applewood of a kitchen table and bursts forth in glory by the warmth of some New England hearth, when he reads the following segment from “The Tuolumne Camp” of *First Summer*:

Butterflies and the grand host of smaller flies are benumbed every night, but they hover and dance in the sunbeams over the meadows before noon with no apparent lack of playful, joyful life. Soon they must all fall like petals in an orchard, dry and wrinkled, not a wing of all the mighty host left to tingle the air. Nevertheless new myriads will arise in the spring, rejoicing, exulting, as if laughing cold death to scorn.²⁴

Several other Thoreauvian images and ideas appear in Muir's book. Lakes shine like "eyes beneath heavy rock brows." Of the desire to live in the wild, Muir writes, "If I had a few sacks of flour, an axe, and some matches, I would build a cabin of pine logs, pile up plenty of firewood about it and stay all winter."²⁵ In *The Maine Woods* Thoreau explains that "If I wished to see a mountain or other scenery under the most favorable auspices, I would go to it in foul weather, so as to be there when it cleared up; we are then in the most suitable mood, and nature is most fresh and inspiring. There is no serenity so fair as that which is just established in a tearful eye."²⁶ Of the Sierra Muir exclaims, "How fresh the woods are and calm after the last films of clouds have been wiped from the sky!"²⁷ Muir's tearful eye image is more subtle than Thoreau's and works quite well. I suggest that Muir did learn much literary skill from his exhaustive and careful reading of Thoreau. We have ample proof now for the many earlier generalizations made by scholars that Muir was a student of Thoreau.

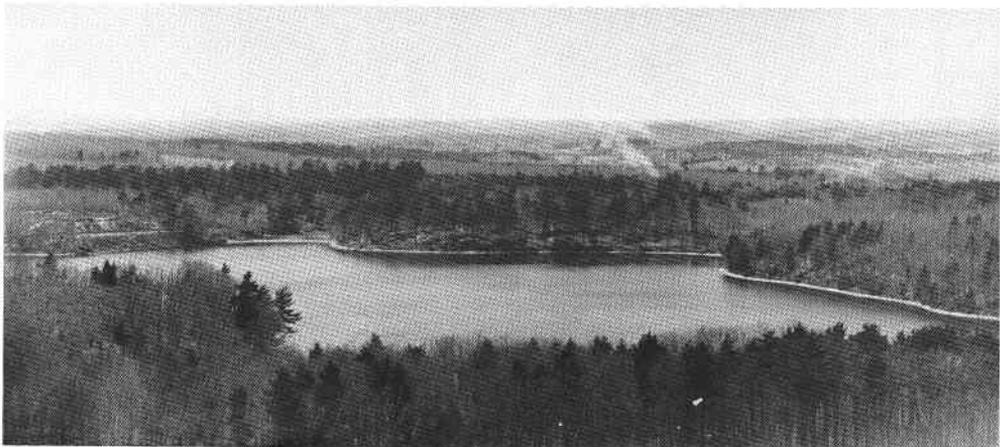
In 1913 Muir published both *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* and *A Thousand-Mile Walk*. In these works one can notice subtle shades of *Walden*. In addition to Muir's love of muskmelons and "mythological" railroads, there is a deep respect and affinity for wildlife. In Muir's penciled index at the back of *Walden* is included "the loon" with a note "perhaps the wildest sound ever heard here." In *Boyhood* Muir devotes a few pages to the loon, which he recalls as being one of the bravest birds he ever encountered. In Thoreauvian language Muir writes, "As soon as the lake ice melted, we heard the lonely cry of the loon, one of the wildest and most striking of all the wilderness sounds, a strange, sad, mournful, unearthly cry, half laughing, half wailing."²⁸ He continues his narrative with an account of his wounding a loon with gunshot and taking it home where the bird did not let on that it was wounded at all but held his head erect and stared keenly with his small black eyes.

In chapter five of *Boyhood*, "Young Hunters," Muir recounts the wholesale slaughter of birds, squirrels and woodchucks by armies of boys who killed for the sake of killing. Certainly Muir had in mind the "Higher Laws" chapter of *Walden* when, after scores of examples are given of ruthless hunting, he comments, "Surely a better time must be drawing nigh when godlike human beings will become truly humane, and learn to put their animal fellow mortals in their hearts instead of on their backs or in their dinners. In the meantime we may just as well as not learn to live clean innocent lives instead of slimy, bloody ones."²⁹ When Thoreau added "Higher Laws" to his *Walden* manuscript, he, of course, had become a vegetarian and had outgrown the "hunting and fishing" phase of his life, which can be seen, surprisingly enough, in the same book, especially the "Baker Farm" chapter written much earlier. Likewise, Muir became less and less a hunter and more a conservationist and defender of wildlife in all forms. In *A Thousand-Mile Walk* Muir comes to the defense of alligators, bear and deer. Each creature has the right to exist. He comments on deer hunting as the "'d---dest work to slaughter God's cattle for sport. 'They were made for us,' say these self-approving preachers; 'for our food, our recreation, or other uses not yet discovered.' As truthfully we might say on behalf of a bear, when he deals successfully with an unfortunate hunter, 'Men and other bipeds were made for bears, and thanks be to God for claws and teeth so long.'"³⁰ Muir's powerful

sense of irony must have emerged out of years of struggle for the preservation of wild lands from hunters, trappers and miners.

The scope of this article does not permit me to examine further published writings of Muir, but suffice it to say that *Steep Trails* and *Life and Letters* (as well as unpublished journals) abound in Thoreauvian imagery and theme. John Muir was no rote imitator of Thoreau but rather a thoughtful integrator of this New England master into his own system of Sierra values. He read and digested Thoreau, but energies coming out of this process had the distinct quality of John Muir. Were it not for Muir's deep literary appreciation of the writing of Henry David Thoreau perhaps he would have never really overcome his difficulty with, as he put it, "dead bone heaps of words." Henry Thoreau gave him the inspiration to express his own unique feelings, thoughts and observations coming from experience of which Thoreau could have never even dreamed such as climbing high, windy Mount Shasta to be trapped by a blizzard and then frozen and volcanically roasted for one perilous night, or looking into the high Himalaya Mountains from the deodar forests of India, or bouncing along a rough arctic glacier in a dogsled driven by a Siberian Chukchi native, or camping in the High Sierra with a U.S. president and succeeding in conveying to him the need for a national park system. John Muir gained, I venture to say, immeasurable literary skills and enjoyment by reading Thoreau. But were Thoreau able to read such books as Muir's *Travels in Alaska* or *My First Summer in the Sierra*, who can say what may have been the effect on his life!

Though young John Muir missed Thoreau by fifty miles in Wisconsin in June, 1861, he did get to see Thoreau's old haunts in June, 1893. He visited Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and laid flowers on Thoreau's and Emerson's graves. "I think it is the most beautiful graveyard I ever saw," writes Muir.³¹ After leaving his beloved Henry Thoreau, he walked through the woods to Walden Pond. He reflected that this was "a beautiful lake . . . fairly embosomed like a bright dark eye in wooded hills of smooth moraine of gravel and sand, and with a rich leafy undergrowth of huckleberry, willow, and young oak bushes." And Muir adds, "No wonder Thoreau lived here two years. I could have enjoyed living here two hundred or two thousand . . . how people should regard Thoreau as a hermit on account of his little delightful stay here I cannot guess."³² That evening Muir



Courtesy of Conover-Mills Publications

Walden Pond, "a beautiful lake . . . fairly embosomed like a bright dark eye in wooded hills of smooth moraine of gravel and sand, and with a rich leafy undergrowth of huckleberry, willow, and young oak bushes."

dined with Emerson's son, Edward Waldo Emerson and, of all people, Edward's father-in-law who was a college mate of Thoreau. Surely Muir read his 1906 edition of *Walden* back at Martinez with more intimacy than ever before. The spirit of Thoreau must have touched him deeply during his exhaustive writing days after 1907. When Muir's own day came to an end on Christmas Eve, 1914, a final parallel occurred; Muir had Alaska on his mind and while he may not have uttered the words "Indian" and "moose" just before he died as Thoreau reportedly had done, John Muir was certainly thinking about Indians and a relative of the moose, the caribou.

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NOTES:

1. Walter Harding, "Introduction" to Henry David Thoreau, *Thoreau's Minnesota Journey: Two Documents*, ed., Walter Harding (Geneseo, NY: Thoreau Society Booklet No. Sixteen, 1962), p. i.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
3. Unpublished papers at the Holt-Atherton Center for Western Studies, hereafter abbreviated as JMP, UOP (John Muir Papers, University of the Pacific).
4. It is interesting to note that in an unpublished fragment written circa 1900 Muir refers to Emerson's correspondence with him in which Emerson said much about Thoreau and he wondered if "anyone in Cal — a young genius — could edit his [Thoreau's] unpublished MS." Though these letters are apparently lost, it does appear that Emerson hinted to Muir that he should edit the unpublished writings of Thoreau. JMP, UOP
5. JMP, UOP.
6. Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," *Excursions* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1893), p. 253.
7. JMP, UOP.
8. Samuel Young, *Alaska Days with John Muir* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), p. 67.
9. John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), I, p. 91.
10. Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961), p. 106.
11. *The Mountains of California*, I, p. 171.
12. *Ibid.*, II, p. 11.
13. John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), p. 169.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
15. *The Maine Woods*, p. 6.
16. *Our National Parks*, p. 279.
17. *The Maine Woods*, p. 102.
18. *Our National Parks*, p. 317.
19. Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1981), p. 12.
20. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed., J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 5.
21. *Our National Parks*, p. 3.
22. John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), p. 106.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
26. *The Maine Woods*, pp. 229-230.
27. *My First Summer*, pp. 239-240.
28. John Muir, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), p. 123.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
30. John Muir, *A Thousand-Mile Walk* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), pp. 342-343.
31. John Muir, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, ed. William F. Badè (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), II, p. 267.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 268.