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John Muir

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A RARE MUIR ENTRY FOUND IN YOSEMITE

Naturalist's Account of a Storm Is Published for First Time

By C. A. HARWELL,
Park Naturalist, Yosemite National
Park

John Muir made his first trip to Yosemite in 1868. From that year the valley became his mountain home and the Sierras the object of his greatest interest. He explored their every corner. His travels afoot through steep canyons, to the summits of the master peaks of the range, and the intimate experiences of these long and varied tramps are well known through Mr. Muir's own published accounts of them. He was a thorough scientist. The geological story of the formation of the range and the mighty erosive forces which had carved out lake basins, broad valleys, steep-walled canyons and rounded domes fascinated him. On his every trip he gathered new evidence and new data to support his theory that mighty glaciers of the ice age were responsible not only for the deep carving of the Yosemite canyons, but for the rounding and polishing of the many wonderful granite domes of the region. He believed a glacier deep enough to extend several thousand feet above the top of Half Dome covered the region.

On one of his trips, September 29, 1873, he stopped at La Casa Nevada, built in 1870 on Table Rock, just below Nevada Falls, and operated by Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Snow. His signature occurs several times in a valuable old register now on exhibit in the History Room of our Yosemite Museum, which shows the registration of guests at "Snows' House" from April 28, 1870, to June 9, 1875. On this particular visit a full two-page entry in his own very distinct handwriting was made. This, not previously published, follows:

"September 29, 1873.

"Mrs. A. G. Black, Yosemite.

"John Muir, Oakland, Calif.

"A. G. Black, Guide, Yosemite.

"Made delightful trip around from Glacier Point across the valley of Illilouette and down through Little Yosemite to the main valley via Nevada and Vernal Falls. 06850

Outlook From Glacier

"Glacier Point commands a noble and instructing view of the Tenaya Canyon, down whose ample channel descended the great Tenaya Glacier which played so important a part in the excavation of Yosemite Valley. The less regular, crooked and

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dome-blocked channel of the South Lyell Glacier is also well seen from here, as well as those of Yosemite Creek, Hoffman, and Illilouette Glaciers. These fine principal Yosemite glaciers, now feebly represented by streams of the same name, united in the upper end of the great valley as a focal point, concentrating their erosive energy and flowing down and out of the valley as one grand glacier.

"From Sentinel Dome a still more comprehensive view of the channels and fountains of these old ice rivers is obtained. The knotty domes and ridge waves of Yosemite Creek—the steep descending groove-shaped valleys of the Hoffman, the bald, simple furrow of the Tenaya, the broad, irregular pathway of the Nevada or South Lyell, interrupted with domes as a water stream is by boulders, and the wide flask-shaped basin of Illilouette ridged with moraines, and manifesting its noble ice-wombs in sublime simplicity among the bounding peaks of the so-called 'Merced Group.'

Description of Storm

"While we lingered upon Sentinel Dome a fine storm was observed in progress among the black, jagged summits of the Lyell Group. Long, bent tresses of rain descended from the base of a dense, bluish-black cloud in which some of the peaks were outlined dimly, while others were wholly obscured down to their shoulders. Above the dark rain cloud a series of fine-grained, light-colored cirri were laid in exquisite combinations and these, again, were surmounted by white, bossy, sun-filled cumuli glowing upon the tranquil azure. We watched the motions of the storm as it swept leisurely northward, bathing the grateful mountains in its path, settling down upon each in turn with a fondling gentleness of gesture that is utterly indescribable. Nor was there wanting the majestic tones of the lightning falling in deep, rumbling explosions and reverberating from peak to peak with greater and greater faintness.

"After dark, looking back towards the head of Little Yosemite, a belt of cloud appeared drawn across from wall to wall that shimmered with lightning in every pore.

"The autumn tints of the rubus, maple and wild cherry were most enchanting, the latter covering the banks of Illilouette with a mist of yellow. We reached Snows' weary with delight and the Nevada sang us asleep."

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