



1879-07-09

## Letter from John Muir to [Strentzel Family], 1879 Jul 9.

John Muir

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence>

---

### Recommended Citation

Muir, John, "Letter from John Muir to [Strentzel Family], 1879 Jul 9." (1879). *John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)*. 493.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/493>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the John Muir Correspondence 1856-1914 at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Muir Correspondence (PDFs) by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [mgibney@pacific.edu](mailto:mgibney@pacific.edu).

Steamship California,  
On the Columbia, a few  
miles below Astoria;  
July 9<sup>th</sup> 1879. —

Dear friends three.

Your bottles, letters, one from  
Louie & one from the Doctor were received at Seattle  
two days ago, the whole sinking or raising me  
more & more irredeemably in debt.

I am on my way to Alaska. Will go as far as  
Sitka to obtain general views of the Coast & as much  
of the interior as good & safe opportunities chance  
to offer. The California is a staunch little screw  
steamer smooth & narrow & will no doubt roll &  
plunge in a rough sea like a porpoise at play  
but I can not know how rough the way that leads where  
I want to go, & as for storms I heartily enjoy them  
either on land or sea. I mean to stop over one  
trip so I will probably be in that northland  
a month or two.

After leaving Olympia at the head of Puget Sound  
we returned to Victoria & sailed thence to New West-  
minster on the Fraser River. Then took another  
steamer to Yale about a hundred miles up -  
the head of navigation. Spent one day in the  
mountains there, & returned to Victoria. Then  
sailed again for Seattle & Tacoma. At the latter  
place took the Cars for Kalama on the Columbia  
105 miles. Then a steamer from Kalama for  
Portland when we arrived last evening at  
5 O'Clock. The California & Oregon were lying at



The dock, both to sail at 3. A M next morning -  
Maze took the one for his wife-home-+-business  
I the other for \_\_\_\_\_ + trees-+ ice-etc.

The Overland expedition is therefore definitely postponed  
for at least a year. The way for all I could learn  
was clear enough - but I would not choose to  
undertake it alone.

Lieutenant Cooper commanding the Steamship Wolcott  
invited me to go to Alaska with him in the Revenue  
Cutter lying at Port Townsend. I would have a good  
time with him, but as he did not know within  
a month or two when his sailing orders would  
arrive, I concluded to go less comfortably + at  
greater expense on this black porpoise.

We will touch at Victoria + other ports - thus it  
will appear that I will have visited this British  
City four times, besides sailing the whole length  
of Puget Sound three times, + up + down a hundred  
miles of the Fraser + Columbia rivers. So much  
I have seen of water + shore, forests + mountains  
it seems incredible to me that the Almanac time  
since leaving San Francisco should be less than  
three weeks.

Sheldon Jackson the missionary + Commissioner  
man who lectured in Yosemite on Alaska will  
go with us. We have only about a dozen passengers  
aboard as yet, but will pick up more at Victoria  
+ Port Townsend.

On my return I hope to make some good excursions  
into the woods + up some of the Snowy Cones in N. T.  
+ Oregon. The owner of the mills at Burrard Inlet

who sent that famous plank of Douglas Spruce to the Centennial is anxious that we visit the woods there. So also the owners of the Coal mines at Seattle & Carbon are offering their mines as just the spots of greatest interest to a geologist. At Port Townsend I met Mr Webster the Collector of Customs & a Mr Swan who has long been a correspondent of Agassiz. Also a noted hunter & mountaineer by the name of Stratton. These gentlemen offer to make up a party to explore the Olympic Range when I return. So you see I will not be alone unless I so choose.

The season is not yet sufficiently advanced for excursions into the dense woods, or up the snowladen peaks. The streams are all deep & the ground is covered with a saturated sponge of mosses.

From one point on the Columbia a few miles below ~~Portland~~ the mouth of the Walamette I saw five snowy cones from ten to fourteen thousand feet high. Mt Rainier, Mt St Helens, Mt Adams, Mt Hood, & the North Sister?

Rainier & St Helens are the noblest mountains I ever saw, surpassing even Shasta, in the beauty of their lines & in iciness & in whiteness. Hood is much less imposing - sharp & rugged & wanting in solid massiness.

Rainier is best seen from Tacoma on Puget Sound, St Helens from the Columbia. The one is the



On the morning I only say thank you. Ever truly John Mearns

sol star - the fresh white light of the sound, the other of the lower Columbia.

We are just approaching the bar, & our little ship is beginning to plunge. We will probably reach Victoria tomorrow where I will mail this. I sent some books that I did not care to carry from Victoria a week ago, also some plants to Louis, & again at Seattle the other day a bookful of colored maple leaves & a box of burs & bushes etc. Should you get them soon some of them - the arbor vitae & spurge may grow - my love we are fetching and on - crossing the bar, two hours ago the wind began to blow hard from the sea, sending a fleet of fishing boats & coddling home some 30 or 40 of them like frightened gulls. I must go on deck & see the famous bar

Your loving kindness & confidence are very comforting to a lonely wanderer. I feel strong & sure & if I stand will return to you notwithstanding your sacrificing care for me <sup>makes me</sup> uneasy when I think about it, accustomed as I have been to fight on & walk on relying only on God & myself