



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

---

1907-11-29

**Letter from J. E. Calkins to John Muir, 1907 Nov 29.**

J. E. Calkins

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

---

**Recommended Citation**

Calkins, J. E., "Letter from J. E. Calkins to John Muir, 1907 Nov 29." (1907). *John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)*. 3844.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/3844>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by 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).

2252 West Thirtieth street,  
Los Angeles, California.  
Nov. 29, 1907.

My Dear Mr. Muir:—

Forgive me for becoming too much engrossed with my own small concerns to be fairly neighborly with you. I have been getting my goods and chattels settled into some sort of homelike arrangement, and this work, indoors and out, takes time and makes a man forget what is due from him.

Your last letter, enclosing the Hetch-Hetchy chapter, came duly to hand, and was very welcome, though the news of Miss Helen's serious illness was far from comforting. We have both been taking the liberty to worry somewhat on her account. She seemed to us to need a gentler climate than wintry Arizona or the moisture of the next four months in the vicinity of her home. No doubt she is getting the best that can be provided for her, still we shall feel anxious till we know that she is on the way to health and strength.

Did you get a consignment of Hetch-Hetchy photographs from our mutual friend, T.P. Lukens of Pasadena? I paid him a visit several weeks ago, and we canvassed the Hetch-Hetchy matter at considerable length. He said he had some 60 negatives at his home, all taken in the valley, and that he thought you might be able to make some use of them in your correspondence with Washington, and that he would at once have a set of good prints made, and send them to you. Later I received a card from him in which he stated that he had sent the pictures as promised. I do not know whether he wrote you in connection with this shipment or not; perhaps he did not deem any lengthy communications necessary; but in conversation with him he spoiled my hopes for capturing the influence of the Los Angeles Times. He says that while Gen. Otis of that paper is not in the scheme himself, he has a number of friends and fellow capitalists who are bent on similar designs upon the peace and beauty of the valley of the Kern, as soon as they

03984

get around to it, wherefore they cannot be induced to attack Mr. Phelan's schemes; further, their influence muzzles the Times.

On the other hand Mr. Lukens thought that Gifford Pynchot might be in the way of provoking Gen. Otis to wrath and reprisal by his choice of associates while in this city—which was at that very time. Mr. Pynchot, it appears, was so unfortunate, or so ill-advised, as to betake himself almost wholly to the company of Gen. Otis's dearest enemy. On this account, Mr. Lukens imagined, the Times might be led, in the end, to throw a few rocks at Mr. Pynchot, even if in the rebound they were to carom off the heads of some of the General's friends; but I do not learn that Mr. Lukens has been able to secure any such degree of this hostility as we should like to see.

I should have sent you the enclosed letters before this, but they, with other matters that were in need of attention, had the misfortune to be laid on the shelf till the convenient day came along. Representative Dawson stands for the Second Iowa Congressional district, and is a good fellow with whom I have had a very pleasant acquaintance covering several years. Mr. Ficke, to whom he writes, is a wealthy and cultured gentleman of Davenport, and one of my good friends there. He has been quite active in his correspondence in this matter, and I am sure it is resultful. I add to this letter of Mr. Dawson's another of Prof. Thomas H. McBride, of the State University of Iowa, and one in which I am sure you will find matter to interest you. Macbride is one of the best men on earth, and you will find that you have made a distinct acquisition if ever you have the good fortune to add him to the list of your acquaintances.

Your scheme of getting the thousand members of your club to take up the pen in defense of the valley is on the way to a successful issue, if I am not mistaken. It may be, as you say, that many of them lack the effective note in this sort of correspondence, or it may be that many of them do not have the acquaintance that yields influence, but still it cannot happen that any given 1000 men will be altogether destitute of cleverness in the presentation of the case, or of "pull" with the powers that be. There must be many among them, if they will only take the pains and trouble to write, who can start somebody else going. The net result will be the sort of general protest that cannot be disregarded.

You must pardon me for saying, as I think I said to you when we were together, that you yourself are the most capable advocate of the valley in this hour of its peril. I think Prof. Macbride states your relation to all Sierra interests very clearly and fairly. Your beautiful chapter on Hetch-Hetchy,

03984

if it could be offered the press of the country, daily and periodical, would receive instant attention and arouse general interest, and, I am sure, set in motion a general protest against the proposed iniquity that would squelch it and the other like schemes that depend upon it.

For, as I see the matter, it is vastly larger than the confines of the Hetch-Hetchy. If the program now laid out goes through Hetch-Hetchy will be only the starting point in a general campaign of commercialization that will lay waste the finest things in the whole Sierra region, if indeed it stops at the door of that sanctuary, the Yosemite itself. If Hetch-Hetchy can be grabbed away from the people in the manner proposed, then Kings river, and the Kern, and the rest of them can be taken, and even the Merced, defended by the boundaries of a national park, may not be safe. The whole fight is to be won or lost right on this initial point. If Hetch-Hetchy goes, then all the rest of them will follow in swift procession.

Again, we have in the White House at this time a president who is a personal friend of yourself, and a warm defender of the wilderness as a thing so necessary to the welfare of nature loving men that it is bread and meat for them. But he says this is to be his last term, whether or no. Will his successor care anything whatever for the sweet wild things of the high mountain valleys? Or will he even know who John Muir is, or care to learn? In short, Mr. Pynchot to the contrary notwithstanding, it seems to me that things lie right to defeat this whole unrighteous plot just at this time, and that there is no time to be lost. I can see it only this way, that now is the accepted time, and that there is no other man who can do so much as you, and that what is done now in this matter will govern the whole situation, both now and to come. This is not to say that you are to do it all; only to say that you must show yourself as mainly and unselfishly interested—interested in behalf of the best interests of the people—and let your name be used wherever it will have influence. After that you must use whomsoever and whatever can be found that may be of assistance. I will do whatever I can, though at the best it cannot be much. I am too small a figure in every way to do anything great.

It has seemed best for us, on several accounts, to spend the winter in this city. We are getting into comfortable shape, and as soon as we can get a few more things arranged we shall be delighted to have you come to us, in case you find it convenient to do so. This means the two of you. You have other Los Angeles friends who can make it very much more endurable here for you than we can. We have no automobile, & r

03984

instance, and a big auto' really is a very comfortable adjunct to the home establishment in a region where the weather and the roads and the company are good. I have some work on hand, but if those old notes of yours seem to you to be in a state of ferment, and you want to do something with them, and think that I can do the mechanical part of the work to your liking, we might make an arrangement of some kind, might we not, whereby we could make use of our house down here and get that work done? It is a good thing to do, and it ought to be done. And there is no other man but yourself to do it. I simply hate to think of all that beautiful stuff being lost to the nature lovers of this country, for I know that they are hungry for it, and the record is one that should be made for the sake of keeping alive the truth. If you and Miss Helen do not go fossil hunting somewhere away from here, but decide to come here and see what can be done in these ways, I have no doubt that all can be conveniently arranged. And if the end of the adventure should be another book by John Muir the winter would have been well spent beyond telling. I am not trying to tickle you by simply saying nice things, but am speaking the words of truth and soberness, as I myself feel them.

Have you put "Stickeen" into book form yet? I suppose not, but when you do please consider one copy sold to me, for my own personal use. After that I shall buy at will as the need arises to confer favor or pleasure on some friend, of whom I have several who are bound to be delighted with that book when they get it.

I have ambled and rambled through four pages to very little purpose. You understand that I am ready for anything I can do in the Hetch-Hetchy campaign, under your generalship, and that our door stands open to you, and we will do the best we can for you in whatever way. I hope you can be with Macbride in Hetch-Hetchy next summer, and if I might go along, somewhere in hearing distance, and carry the bag of bread crumbs and the blankets and do other useful and unpoetic things, I should be too deeply delighted to sleep at the end of the day. We both send our warmest regards to Miss Helen, and should be delighted to have her here as long as she might find it agreeable to stay. For yourself you need no assurance of your welcome. Keep me notified of anything that I must do to take care of the valley, and believe me,

faithfully yours,

J. E. Calkins

03984

Send me a few more booklets if you have them to spare, etc.