



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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Letter from S. Hall Young to John Muir, 1910 Aug 24.

S. Hall Young

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Cordova, Alaska;

August 24th, 1910.

John Muir, Martinez, Calif.,

Dear Friend,

I wrote you by last mail, and now I write again in the hope that I can induce you to make at least a flying trip to this region before cold weather. My special reason is Childs Glacier. I go to Mile 49 on the R.R. every other Thursday to hold religious services with the people who have been building the great million and a half dollar bridge which crosses the Copper River at that point between Childs and Miles Glaciers. I always spend an afternoon and forenoon with Childs Glacier, and have been observing it with a good deal of interest and some care. Last week I found Prof. Lawrence Martin of the U. of Wisconsin at the Camp. He has been there over a week and is making careful observations and measurements.

The chief interest just now centers at Childs Glacier because of the great start it has made and its rapid and constantly accelerated movement towards the steel bridge. It is now advancing up the north bank of the River (See sketch map) from two to four feet per day. It has travelled towards the bridge since the snow left the ground about 400 feet. Its speed is constantly increasing.

The absorbing question with the R.R. people is "Will the glacier keep on coming until it shoves the great bridge aside and destroys the R.R.?"

When I told the engineers of my hopes that you would make me a visit this summer they expressed a very earnest desire that you would do so and give them your opinion as to the probable future movements of the glaciers. Mr. Hawkins, the Chief Engineer and Manager, wrote you a letter of invitation, which I was to give you on your arrival. All, including Prof. Martin, were much disappointed when I told them last week that you had written that you could not come, and they wished me to write again telling you the special reason for your coming this season. Prof. Martin has not completed his observations and report, and is particularly desirous of having you give your judgment on this important question. The glacier is less than a quar-

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ter of a mile from the bridge, and if it keeps on coming at anything like its present rate it will reach the bridge in less than two years and will lock the gate to the greatest copper mines in the world, entailing the loss of untold millions to the Morgan-Guggenheim Syndicate and to Alaska.

At the middle of the glacier stream ^{of ice} where the rapid current of the river sweeps with tremendous force against the concave center of the glacier front the breaking off of large masses is constant, and yet the glacier has there pushed the river bodily over on the east bank more than fifty feet the last two months, cutting away the trees and the bank.

I suppose you have read the interesting report of Prof. Tarr of Cornell and Prof. Martin, published in last January's No. of the National Geographic Magazine, on their Alaskan Expedition of 1909. That emphasizes the fact that the most of the large Coast glaciers are advancing. Prof. Martin tells me that Taylor Glacier has advanced more than six miles in the last forty years. If Miles and Childs Glaciers are following this law it seems to me that the R.R. is doomed; but I do not wish to be a prophet of evil until somebody wiser than myself in the movements of glaciers pronounces on the matter. So you see that your speedy visit to this region may be of great moment to us all.

If you could come before the end of September you would have time for observation before snow-fall. Cannot you "tak a thocht an' come?"

Mrs. Young warmly seconds my eannest personal invitation.

Yours as ever,

S. H. Young.

I sent a letter last week to you at San Francisco.