

Months of Sorrow and Renewal: John Muir in Arizona, 1905-1906 by Peter Wild
Journal of the Southwest Vol. 29, No. 1 Spring, 1987, pp. 20-40
posted by permission of the *Journal of the Southwest* at
johnmuir.org/arizona

Months of Sorrow and Renewal: John Muir in Arizona, 1905-1906

PETER WILD

Most of us are surprised to learn that John Muir spent considerable time in Arizona. In our mind's eye we see the famed naturalist and founder of the Sierra Club exploring the recesses of California's snowy Sierra—not trekking across arid and often flat Arizona. The Scottish immigrant turned conservationist himself promoted the image. For instance, this dramatic self-portrait as he hangs by his fingertips by a waterfall three thousand feet above Yosemite Valley:

. . . it looked dangerously smooth and steep, and the swift roaring flood beneath, overhead, and beside me was very nerve-trying. I therefore concluded not to venture farther, but did nevertheless. Tufts of artemisia were growing in clefts of the rock near by, and I filled my mouth with the bitter leaves, hoping they might help to prevent giddiness. Then, with a caution not known in ordinary circumstances, I crept down safely to the little ledge, got my heels well planted on it, then shuffled in a horizontal direction twenty or thirty feet. . . . Here I obtained a perfectly free view down into the heart of the snowy, chanting throng of comet-like streamers, into which the body of the fall soon separates.¹

Yet “John o’ Mountains” was far more than an adventurer boyishly exulting in newfound territory. “Wherever we go in the mountains,” he rejoiced, “or indeed in any of God’s wild fields, we find more than we seek.”² As a transcendentalist, he saw the evidence of God’s hand at work in pristine nature. And though we tend to

1. John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (Houghton Mifflin, 1911), pp. 158-59.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 251. For more on Muir as mountaineer and transcendentalist, see Arthur W. Ewart, “Spiritual Sauntering,” *Sierra* 71 (July-August 1986): 48-52.

PETER WILD is a poet and professor of English at the University of Arizona.
His most recent book is *Pioneer Conservationists of Eastern America* (1986).



Pot given to Alice Cotton Fletcher by John Muir. (*Courtesy: John Muir National Historic Site.*)

forget it, he saw a large portion of His handiwork, in Alaska, Russia, Africa, the Amazon, Japan. Be that as it may, with our heroic view of peripatetic Muir, we risk losing sight of the man. Wherever he went, he was involved in a continuing interaction of the landscape, his personal circumstances, and his philosophy. Though one can't always presume to reconstruct this complex process, "catching" Muir in a particular place can tell us a good deal about the development of the private person behind the public figure.

The follower of John Muir benefits from a healthy number of biographies. Yet tracking the mountaineer in the comprehensive way suggested above still awaits the efforts of some ambitious scholar. We might be able to be of some help in this regard, though, as concerns Arizona. Over his long life, Muir made several trips to what was then a lightly settled territory, and some of them were telling experiences. For instance, with the blessing of Congress, in 1896 the National Forestry commission conducted a survey of the West. Joining it as an *ex officio* member, Muir met another conservationist, Gifford Pinchot. The two took to one another immediately, with wealthy and cultured Easterner Pinchot somewhat mystified at Muir's flamboyant *joie* in the wilds. At the Grand Canyon, while the other members followed the itinerary, the two romped off on their own for the bad boys' good time.³ The brief revel stuck in Pinchot's mind as a capital event, for in old age he wrote in his memoirs:

While the others drove through the woods to a "scenic point" and back again, with John Muir I spent an unforgettable day on the rim of the prodigious chasm, letting it soak in. I remember that at first we mistook for rocks the waves of rapids in the mud-laden Colorado, a mile below us. And when we came across a tarantula he wouldn't let me kill it. He said it had as much right there as we did.⁴

Sparing the hairy araneid was no sleight of showmanship on Muir's part. In Muir's mind, all nature was good in itself, to be appreciated and preserved. For his part, practical Pinchot saw nature as a treasure trove of resources, to be used wisely, but used

3. Frank Graham, Jr., *Man's Dominion: The Story of Conservation in America* (M. Evans, 1971), pp. 95-97.

4. Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (Harcourt, Brace, 1947), p. 103.

nonetheless. To leave them untouched was pure folly in his uncomprehending view. The last sentences of the above quote, then, mark a chink in a widening gap between the two conservationists—indeed between the “preservationist” and the “utilitarian” camps of environmentalists down to our day. With the hope of protecting God’s open spaces as inviolate, Muir went on to campaign for creation of more national parks. Pinchot, who successfully aspired to become the first head of the timber-cutting United States Forest Service, just as earnestly saw trees as potential dollars. As Muir and Pinchot battled at cross-purposes over the years to come, the split became bitter.⁵

Almost every historian of the environmental movement plows the ground of the Muir/Pinchot schism, cause of great smoke and fire in its time. While the “tarantula affair” in Arizona that turned out to be an early inkling of trouble has been well known since Gifford Pinchot wrote about it in 1947, not so well known are the months Muir spent in Arizona during 1905–1906. There is understandable reason for historians’ glancing treatment of the period. About to enter his seventh decade, by this time Muir was approaching the end of his career. Not that he was tapering off. Always an active man, he wrote and vigorously lobbied for preservation until the end. He would die in 1914 with the manuscript of *Travels in Alaska* at his side.⁶ Yet by 1905, the pattern of his contribution was clear. Furthermore, 1905–1906 was an interregnum; during that period he fought no publicity-arousing shoot-outs with the Pinchot forces; he published little. While on the desert, the aging conservationist performed no great feats; he didn’t dance the Highland fling through the night to keep from freezing on some icy peak, as he had done earlier in life. Muir’s 1905–1906 stay in Arizona was a family matter. Yet it emerges as a factor in the budding appreciation of America’s long-ignored arid sweeps. More specifically, the period is important to at least one major reform that continues to bless the Southwest. On a personal level, as recently as 1985 a Muir scholar

5. Most bitter in the Hetch-Hetchy controversy. An aging Muir strove to keep a dam out of a Sierra valley, while utilitarians backed by Pinchot strove to get it built. The utilitarians won. The best account of the years-long and complicated affair is Holway Jones’s *John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite* (Sierra Club, 1965).

6. Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness: The Life of John Muir* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), pp. 347–48.

wrote that “Only a scattering of devotees . . . know of Muir’s private life and his role as a devoted though unconventional family man.”⁷ In this regard, “catching” Muir in Arizona can help make amends, for here we see a forceful but kindly public figure beset by the ills that dog the best-laid plans of all of us. And tangentially, the glimpse illuminates conditions in the territory as the frontier days gave way to civilization and statehood.

Because of the health of one of his daughters, John Muir stayed in the desert off and on between the spring of 1905 and the summer of 1906, traveling back and forth by train between Arizona and his prosperous orchards near Martinez, in northern California. To place the period in context, we might remember that the conservationist was a dedicated public figure as well as a dedicated family man. In 1903, the acclaimed naturalist had camped out in Yosemite with none other than Theodore Roosevelt—eliciting the exuberant remark from the President that he’d had a “bully” time out in the wilds with cheery Muir. Due to Muir’s “working on” Roosevelt, the excursion later accomplished no end of good in nudging the conservation-minded administration toward further preservation. In 1904, after completing a trip around the world, Muir plunged into lobbying to win national-park status for Yosemite.⁸ Fresh from his globe-trotting tour, gladdened by the Yosemite victory, publicly influential Muir was a happy man.

He was happy, too, because of his family situation. He and his wife, Louie, enjoyed one of the great love affairs in the annals of conservation history. Their two daughters, Wanda, twenty-four, and Helen, nineteen, increased the joy:

7. Jean Hanna Clark and Shirley Sargent, eds., *Dear Papa: Letters between John Muir and his Daughter Wanda* (Panorama West Books, 1985), p. vii.

8. Scholars still wrangle—and probably always will—over which was our first national park, Yosemite or Yellowstone. It comes down to this: Before there was any such thing as a national park, Abraham Lincoln ceded the spectacular, federally owned Yosemite Valley to California in 1864, for use as a state park. Yellowstone became the first *federal* preserve of its kind in 1872. By the time California, seeking better protection for its natural jewel, returned Yosemite to federal control in 1905, the country already had several national parks. But proponents for the Yosemite case argue that the park idea began in California. For a concise discussion of this tempest in a teapot among historians, consult Graham, *Man’s Dominion*, pp. 157–60.

What good times ensued when he was home! "Father [was] the biggest, jolliest child of us all," Wanda said. What stories he told. The girls heard about Stickeen long before that brave little dog became the hero of one of Muir's most popular books. And what a natural and enthusiastic teacher he was. Inevitably his main subject was nature, "taught" in walks, in comments, even in letters. Soon his receptive daughters shared his affection and appreciation for outdoor marvels. By example and remark, he instructed them to observe, think, and study. They learned verses of his beloved Bobby Burns, for Muir often quoted him in his broadest Scots. Laughter and love were integral to their daily lives.⁹

No sentimental gush, the vignette shows a stable, warm, and intellectually rich Victorian household.

By early May of 1905, however, the moths had begun to creep in. Helen, always a frail child, couldn't shake lingering symptoms from a bout with pneumonia. The doctor advised the high, dry air of Arizona.¹⁰ To appreciate the intensity of the family's concern, we might remind ourselves that in the days before antibiotics, the disease often was a killer. Muir, the two daughters, and a nurse, boarded a train and headed for the Arizona desert. Muir's wife, Louie, who, as we shall see, had her own health problems, stayed behind.¹¹

A celebrant of fresh air, Muir planned to give Helen a good dose of it by camping out. The weather proved rainy, however, and a friend recommended the Sierra Bonita Ranch north of Willcox, Arizona. He recommended well. The adobe hacienda, cloaked in tales of marauding Indians and Billy the Kid, held charming memories as the genteel gathering place for officers and wives from former Fort Grant. The openhanded generosity of its owner, Col.

9. Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, pp. ix-x.

10. It was a common prescription for respiratory ills. See Billy M. Jones, *Health-Seekers in the Southwest, 1817-1900* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

11. Clark and Sargent offer an exchange of tender family letters during the period of separation in *Dear Papa*, pp. 84-96, from which some of the following details are taken.

Henry C. (Don Pedro) Hooker, attracted guests from far and wide, making them feel "at home" in rustic, history-rich comfort.¹²

It was Muir's kind of place. Beyond the speck of ranch civilization in the "spacious valley" of high, grassy plains, reared "massive mountain walls." The airy spaces proved salubrious for Muir and daughters: "I never breathed air more distinctly, palpably good . . . It fairly thrills and quivers, as if one actually felt the beatings of the infinitely small vital electric waves of life and light drenching every cell of flesh and bone," Muir revealed. As for the host, Don Pedro, "a steady mellow sympathy radiated from his presence like heat from glowing coals."¹³ As years before philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson had put down Muir as one of "My Men,"¹⁴ Muir felt a similar kinship for the openhearted rancher. To jump ahead a bit, the Arizona friendship would bear unexpected benefits. A few years after the stay, when loneliness dogged Muir, he spent considerable time in Los Angeles as the guest of Col. Hooker's brother, John D. Hooker. Here, at another critical time, Muir also felt at home:

There were happy evenings spent playing billiards with the men of the household . . . One night with an air of great bravado he produced a package of Egyptian cigarettes—the first he had ever smoked. When they heckled him about them, he puffed out his chest and said: "I'm seventy years old." (He seldom remembered his exact age.) "I guess I'm old enough to do as I please."¹⁵

12. As a relic of history and romance, the old ranch has garnered considerable attention: for instance, Earle R. Forrest, "The Fabulous Sierra Bonita," *Journal of Arizona History* 6 (Autumn 1965): 132–48; Janet Ann Stewart, "Territorial Ranch Houses of Southern Arizona, 1863–1912," master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1970, pp. 54–66; and Roscoe G. Willson, "Old Sierra Bonita Ranch Gained Story-Book Fame," *Arizona Daily Star*, February 12, 1956.

In "Sierra Bonita Ranch: Family Ownership Reaches 100 Years," *Arizona Daily Star*, December 17, 1972, Wade Cavanaugh passes on a tantalizing tidbit. Col. Hooker kept a book with the signatures of his notable guests, one presumably containing Muir's. Historians who pant after such things will remain tantalized, however. The present generation of Hookers cannot find the old tome.

For sketches of nearby Fort Grant and the town of Bonita, see Ray Brandes, *Frontier Military Posts of Arizona* (Dale Stuart King, 1960), pp. 35–40; Jeff Smith, "Bonita Not Kidding about The Kid," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, May 9, 1977; and Bernice Cosulich, "Bonita, the One Time Rip Roaring Camp," *Arizona Daily Star*, April 24, 1932.

13. Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), pp. 432–33.

14. Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, p. 151.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

More importantly, warmed by his Los Angeles friendships, he completed work on *My First Summer in the Sierra*.¹⁶

But at the end of June of 1905, while Muir basked in the hospitality of Don Pedro and the “waves of life and light,” a telegram arrived from Louie’s doctor. She was gravely ill from pneumonia and a lung tumor. Muir and the girls rushed home. On August 6, 1905, Louie died.¹⁷

After the funeral, a sorrowing Muir, no doubt showing more of his age than before, arrived with Wanda at the Hooker ranch.¹⁸ Helen awaited them, having returned earlier because of her health.¹⁹ For reasons unknown, the threesome soon moved to Adamana, in northeastern Arizona.²⁰

Adamana was an isolated coal and watering station on the Santa Fe railroad. Though it could boast no more than a few buildings, it had the Stevenson Hotel for the Santa Fe passengers who interrupted their transcontinental trips to see the surrounding petrified forest.²¹ The Muirs slept in a tent but took their meals with the other guests. Here, much to the relief of Muir and Wanda, Helen

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 305.

18. Wanda’s faithful support of father and sister plays a leitmotif through the stresses of 1905–1906. The elder, more independent of the two daughters, Wanda left college and her boyfriend at the University of California in Berkeley to attend to Helen, and, no doubt, to her aging father. Later, she turned her attention from her wedding plans to accompany the pair. Spurred by family loyalty, apparently she felt the sacrifice a matter of love’s duty. Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, pp. x–xi, 84, 91–92.

19. Ibid., p. 87.

20. The move seems puzzling in the light of Muir’s friendship with Col. Hooker. Perhaps, disturbed by Louie’s death, the Muirs simply wanted a change. Perhaps, too, they sought the cooler August weather of Arizona’s high, northern plateau. But, then, in a few months they would face the more inclement conditions of the north. That prospect may not have bothered the Muirs, “fresh-air freaks” that they were, for example, Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, p. 85. Whatever, the whole purpose of their Arizona sojourn was to cure Helen, and one can only speculate that the remove had something to do with this.

21. Tiny Adamana has caused more than its share of mischief, at least for those bent on tracking down the origins of place-names. One authority suggests a contraction of the first and last names of a rancher in the area, Adam Hanna, as Adamana’s source. Another writer offers the blending of Adam’s name with that of his wife, Anna. Yet a third, referring to the hardness of petrified wood, proposes a bastardization of “adamant.”

I throw up my hands, leaving the field to other scholars, but first cite sources that may be helpful to them. Several of the following also sketch the settlement, its surrounding forest, and the Muirs’ stay:

Arizona Census, 1900. Entry for Hanna, Adam. Volume 1, Sheet 2. Microfilm at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson. To add spice to the search, the handwritten entry

began to recover.²² As “permanent” guests, the two girls enjoyed taking sightseers on their tours. Wanda, skilled with horses, often drove the wagon over the rough roads and through the tricky washes. As to Muir, though he had to board the train at several junctures, returning home to Martinez to settle matters concerning Louie’s estate, he began to recover, too.

His plunging off into the wilderness of rock around Adamana was not simply the escape of a recent widower. With a soul always more attuned to wild places than to works of man, he struck off into the hundreds of square miles of barren wildness, avidly investigating the stone forest and its Indian ruins. On the trips back to California, he further studied fossils at the University of California in Berkeley—pursuing an interest that would help preserve vast stretches of America. The other side of Muir was his love of people. Or, rather, storytelling Scot that he was, all his life a tease, he loved to talk. He became the focus of attention in the hotel’s dining room.²³

lists Hanna’s wife by initials only. They read “M. A.”—or is it “M. W.”? Daughter Ethel would not seem a factor in the puzzle.

On a related matter, early in these researches my heart raced to discover that Wanda married a man named Thomas Hanna. The union, however, does not appear to be a product of an Arizona romance with a son of Adam Hanna. Wanda met Thomas Hanna at the University of California before her trips to Arizona. He was from Gilroy, California. Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, p. 84. For a sketch of their married life, see pp. 97–100.

“Arizona: Petrified Forest Quadrangle.” United States Geological Survey, 1912. Map collection of Arizona Historical Society, Tucson. William Craft Barnes, *Arizona Place Names* (University of Arizona, 1935. Published as *University of Arizona Bulletin*, VI (January 1, 1935), p. 10. Byrd H. Granger, *Arizona Place Names*, (University of Arizona Press, 1982), p. 3. “Interesting Trip to Petrified Forests in Northern Arizona,” *Arizona Daily Star*, March 19, 1911. Dorila and Dorsey Marting, “Adamana—A Link in Arizona History,” *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), September 30, 1962. “A National Monument,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1907. “Pioneer Gives Name to Arizona Town,” *Arizona Times* (Phoenix), February 18, 1947. “Reminiscences of Mrs. Loy Turbeville,” 1929, typescript in Turbeville file at Arizona Historical Society, Tucson. Lilian Whiting, *The Land of Enchantment* (Little, Brown, 1910), pp. 270–81. Whiting does a good job of catching the “witchery” of the high desert. Apparently, she met the Muirs at Adamana; especially valuable are her comments on Wanda. See also, *Arizona Highways* 62 (July 1986).

Lastly, in Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, pp. 95–96, Wanda drops an intriguing tidbit. Writing to her father on July 9, 1906, she asks: “Did you see the article in the National Magazine about the Petrified Forest, the Bad Lands (which the man hadn’t seen) and the Muir family? I found the magazine in the Lake Eleanor blacksmith shop and read about driving out to the forest. There is a picture of me with Helen’s name under it.” The article has eluded my searches.

22. Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, p. 87.

23. At the drop of a hat, Muir could launch into picturesque monologues running the gamut from the enchantments of water ouzels to exploits on dizzying heights. He

In coming upon Muir at these informal moments, we are fortunate that a girl—Alice Cotton Fletcher—visiting Adamana at the same time as the Muirs was so struck by the mountaineer's twinkling eyes and kindness that she left the memory that follows.²⁴



Along the Way I Met John Muir²⁵

In January 1906²⁶ my father and mother and I were returning East from an extended trip and stopped to spend a few days at Adamana, Arizona in order to visit the Petrified Forest. Adamana consisted of a small nondescript station, a coal bunker and water tower. Back from the tracks sprawled a large ranch style house which included living quarters for the family and staff plus a spacious dining room, that would accommodate a hundred or more people, needed because most of the guests were tourists who stopped off just for the day while on personally conducted tours and only had their dinner there.

My Father had arranged for us to stay several days so we could really take our time exploring all we could find of interest. We found there was a charming living room and several comfortable bedrooms—enough to care for possibly a dozen people—all of which opened onto the long veranda that extended the whole length of the building.

might deliver these in a Scottish brogue brought to the fore for the occasion. Muir, indeed, was part showman. Frederick Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours* (Viking, 1985), pp. 222, 234, 268, 294, 334.

24. I thank Malcolm G. Fletcher, Jr., grandson of Alice Cotton Fletcher, and his wife Lynne, for permission to use the reminiscence, printed here for the first time and reproduced without any editorial interference, except for the notes and correction of minor spelling errors. The original is in the John Muir papers at the University of the Pacific. A copy is available in *The Microform Edition of the John Muir Papers, 1858-1957*, Ronald H. Limbaugh and Kirsten E. Lewis, eds., and distributed by Chadwyck-Healey, Inc., 1021 Prince Street, Alexandria, Virginia, 22314. The memoir may be found in reel V E/51/00405.

25. The date of composition is unknown. One gathers from the last sentence that Alice Cotton Fletcher wrote the piece later in life. In manuscript, the final page bears the address of a nursing home, and a bibliographic card in the microform edition cites the piece as a chapter from Fletcher's autobiography.

26. The date may be in error as to the month. Clearly, Muir was back in Martinez for at least part of January 1906, leaving Wanda with Helen at Adamana. See the note below and Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, pp. 87, 89-91.

At our first meal there were no tourists. Those assembled included the family and guides, plus two manly looking young men, whom the Manager told us were "Hoboes" just passing through. I was astonished to learn that "Hoboes" were men riding the freights on a long journey going West to new adventure, usually without funds. The Woman Manager said she was very glad to feed them because they were always willing to do some work. She certainly rewarded them with a delicious and hearty meal. Later they would take another freight out as the trains of the Santa Fe always stopped here for water and coal.

Also at the table was a very pleasing person, the pretty, courageous local school teacher. She explained that she was tired of city schools and had written the Government in Washington asking if she could be placed in a small school in the west run perhaps by the Government itself. She suggested possibly a school on the Indian Reservations but they had told her that this was the only Post available at the time. It was surprising to me to learn that the Government supplied a teacher if there were 12 pupils in a small locality. Here the Station Master had eleven children and the telegraph operator one so these children were entitled to a teacher.

Seated beside us was an elderly man and his daughter.²⁷ He was tall, thin and rugged appearing in his late sixties, and wore a long gray shaggy beard. His serious and scholarly countenance was lightened by a gay twinkle in his eyes whenever he smiled. I tried desperately to place him, suddenly, without a doubt, I knew it was the famous naturalist John Muir. That first meeting a lively conversation was built around the delectable baked potatoes which were grown by the Manager. My father, a connoisseur from Waterville, Maine exclaimed reluctantly that he had never eaten anything at all like them. And when he amplified the compliment further by saying that in our travels through Idaho—he had not been at all impressed by that state's "prize spuds"! That was really something!

27. Just why Fletcher mentions only one daughter at Adamana in January 1906, is a bit troublesome, for it seems both Wanda and Helen were at Adamana then. Later, in April, Muir and Wanda switched places. It is possible that, whenever it was that Fletcher actually visited Adamana, only Muir and Helen were there. It's also possible that, in looking back after many years, Fletcher's memory combined the two daughters into one person.

We soon learned that this remarkable man was indeed John Muir and that his daughter was living in a tent near the ranch while recovering from Tuberculosis.

Mr. Muir told us that he had been asked to make a study of the Petrified Forest for the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* and write up his findings for a series of articles for that publication.²⁸ He found a fascinated and attentive audience in us, and his daughter enjoyed driving us skillfully about in a buckboard with a stunning pair of swift horses. The vast plains over which we drove had a shallow, dirty unpredictable stream²⁹ which meandered all about the mesas, here today and gone tomorrow, leaving behind dangerous quicksands which only the most experienced driver could detect. If you entered the quicksands by some miscalculation, the driver must make a fast decision whether to whip up the horses and try to gallop to solid ground or to turn back abruptly where you were sure of safe footing. Mr. Muir accompanied us and as the whole area was

28. A search of *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography*, by William F. Kimes and Maymie B. Kimes (W. P. Wreden, 1977) reveals no Muir articles published in *Cosmopolitan*. For promotional reasons, the Santa Fe Railroad expressed interest in Muir's experiences at the petrified forest. However, this probably came late in Muir's association with the area. Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, pp. 92, 94.

On this latter issue, as Alfred Runte discusses in *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks* (Northland Press, 1984), the railroads went beyond beating the drums for passenger travel to scenic areas. To the joy of hard-pressed conservationists, the politically powerful and financially able railroads lobbied effectively for expansion of the national park system. Indeed, at the turn of the century some men could rest in the comfortable delusion that because there was plenty of land to go around, there need not be any conflict between preservation and development. Fueled by such nineteenth-century melioristic ideology, railroad magnates could become generous benefactors of such men as Muir. See, for instance, William H. Goetzmann and Kay Sloan, *Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

The statement needs some balance. Railroad meddling in park affairs has not always been beneficent. Whatever gracious light the publicity men of the railroads might throw on it, basically the powerful corporations were motivated by the profit motive, not transcendentalism. Once entrenched in a good thing, they were reluctant to leave. At one such refusal, Stephen Mather, first director of the National Park Service, personally dynamited a sawmill run by the Great Northern in Glacier Park. Unhappily, bureaucrats who followed in Mather's footsteps have proven less straightforward in dealing with the politically mighty. See Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), pp. 209-10.

29. The Rio Puerco. It is a tributary of the Little Colorado, which in turn flows into the Colorado River. In Spanish, "puerco" means "dirty" or "pig." Either sense is appropriate in the popular imagination for a stream that does more wallowing than flowing. See also Granger, *Arizona Place Names*, p. 20.

covered with Indian relics, broken pottery, unusual rock formations, etc., it was a memorable experience!

Mr. Muir described with much ire how when he first arrived at Adamana he had found an enormous stone crusher set up along with a railroad siding especially built by some enterprising business man, who was planning to crush the petrified wood to make a new abrasive! Needless to say this patriarch of Nature's forest was enraged by such wanton destruction of one of the World's vast wonders! He had tried to persuade this man to give up the idea without success so had then made a special trip to Washington, D.C. where he worked untiringly until he obtained the necessary papers to show conclusively that the Petrified Forest of Arizona was to be made into a National Park.³⁰ Armed with these papers he hurried back to Arizona and had the authority to close down the crusher. While he was away another man had started a similar project only in a different way. This man had unloaded a stout cart and a couple of heavy work horses and was planning to haul the granite like logs on the cart to the railroad and hence to a mill to be ground. The logs and pieces of petrified wood are of tremendous weight for their size and the cart soon collapsed as though it had been put under a stone crusher itself! There it still laid about 100 yards from the tracks. The man and horses gone in disgust. John Muir was delighted that Nature herself had taken a hand in ridding the area of this menace.

He never tired telling us of his discoveries, and explaining with loving care each trophy. He gave us many samples to help us understand as he described enthusiastically and realistically each process or specimen. I, being artistically inclined, was particularly enthralled when he gave me samples of pottery and then explained that the early Indians lined their baskets with clay to hold water and as the baskets wore out they realized that the clay held together without the basket weave. This accounted for the earliest samples of pottery

30. Given the turmoil in Muir's life at the time, the long journey by train East might seem unlikely. Yet, also given Muir's determination to save wild America from the plunderers, it would not have been out of character. Neither Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, p. 306, nor Turner, *Rediscovering America*, p. 334, is definite on the trip to Washington, D.C. However, they have no doubts that Muir used his influence with President Roosevelt to help make preservation of the forest a reality. As Sidney R. Ash and David D. May point out in *Petrified Forest* (Petrified Forest Museum Association, 1969), p. 22, a decade earlier Arizona residents had campaigned for park status, but without success.

having a rough exterior showing the markings of the baskets. The next phase was the plain molded pottery and then the use of figures and designs in red and black. Finally, the pottery itself came in colors and was polished. All of these types had washed down from the sides of the mesas along with the petrified logs which were all buried about ten or fifteen feet from the summit.³¹

Many of the mesas had cliffs at the base which seem to have been split by some cataclysm of nature. The open surface was black in contrast to the gray outside and the Indians had utilized this black smooth portion upon which to carve their hieroglyphics. Mr. Muir had been very busy making a study of the symbols and kept us entranced with his explanations of how each figure meant a person, man, woman, or child; how others meant horses and other animals; still others illustrated the sun, moon, planets and natural wonders and told stories of events according to their grouping. They were sharply imprinted, clear, and expertly done but Mr. Muir had not yet arrived at the date of execution.

He led us excitedly to the top of one mesa which was the only one that could be ascended. There he had already done a great deal of excavating and had unearthed a large tribal or community house the top of which was flush with the ground of the mesa. It had a weird checkerboard effect, constructed with partitions of stone. As he was working alone he had only dug down to the depth of four to five feet. Of course he had used utmost care in order not to do any damage to any relics he might unearth in the few divisions he had excavated.

He decided that it was not a burial place as he had not found any bones up to that time. We all picked up pieces of pottery and corn cobs and ears of corn also petrified which was an intriguing discovery as it made us consider whether the Indians had left before the trees and other items became solidified and the thought had so many ramifications and we knew so little it was awe inspiring!³²

In his study of the Forest so called he had at that time come to the conclusion that the trees were tropical palms. We had thought because of their great girth and length that they must have been a

31. Ash and May survey Indian habitation of the area in *Petrified Forest*, pp. 14-22. Their bibliography, p. 25, is a good guide to more detailed sources.

32. Formation of the forest occurred millions of years before railroad-borne tourists arrived, while man's stay in the area dates from about 1500 years ago. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-14.

coniferous species of fir or pine, floated down from the north and buried in the sands of the desert. We never saw any roots or branches showing that they did not grow there. Their position was in sharp contrast to the Petrified Forest in Yellowstone where the trees stand upright, but have their tops broken off.

This petrification had been taking place for many ages as the trees were buried under tons of dirt. Gradually the clay and sand was being washed away and these immense treasures were being exposed for the future generations.³³ Mr. Muir felt that certain chemicals made the bluish-white quartz consistency and others gave the brilliant reds, yellows and browns. Chips of carnelian, onyx, agate and jasper were strewn all over the area in exotic and intricate patterns like a kaleidoscope fashioned by God's hand!

Although John Muir had been sent to Arizona to study the Petrified Forest, I soon discovered that the true John Muir stood apart from all others and showed his exact nature here as he had all his life. He was interested in everything and was soon engrossed in Indian lore and all Nature's secrets that were unfolding before him. He led us to various large ant hills where the ants only used bright red stones or "Arizona Rubies" as they were called so wherever we would glimpse a red mound on the mesa, on closer inspection, we would find it an ant hill.³⁴ The stones were beautiful and sparkled brilliantly in the sunlight.

I have often wondered if he ever wrote up his work on Arizona because I have never been able to locate such a book.³⁵ In one of our long evenings at the ranch, he told me of his great disappointment in his meeting with Ralph Waldo Emerson, years before in

33. Ibid.

34. My recollection of the situation is that, rather than purposefully piling up "rubies," ants often dredge up attractive pebbles along with other material that they bring to the surface.

35. Muir did not "write up" his trip to Arizona. Over the years, he produced books and articles that touch on Arizona, for example, *Picturesque California, The Rocky Mountains and the Region West of the Rocky Mountains* (J. Dewing, 1887); "Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West," *The Atlantic Monthly* 81 (January 1898): 15-28; and "The Grand Canyon of the Colorado," *The Century Magazine* 65 (November 1902): 107-16.

The years 1905-1906 were lean for Muir publications. After 1906, once Muir regained his emotional legs, he moved beyond sorrow, writing a storm of articles on the threatened Hetch-Hetchy in an effort to save the valley. Then, too, one might speculate that he felt the Arizona experiences, with their painful memories of Louie's death, were best left alone.

the Yosemite Valley. Emerson in his essays seemed to express so beautifully and effectively all the truths that John Muir felt in his heart and he longed to share the glories of his world in the west with Emerson so that Emerson would be able to phrase magnificently a tribute to this wondrous world he loved so deeply. When John Muir learned that Emerson was coming and they had arranged to meet, Mr. Muir made all the plans for a camping trip in the Sierras with this wonderful man. Muir had always carried Emerson's essays in a treasured small volume on most of his travels and he looked forward with great anticipation to being host to the author and showing him all the wonders that God had wrought.

However, he met Mr. Emerson on the Sunset Trail and surrounded by a party that sought only to protect him from anything tiring or fatiguing on the journey.³⁶ Muir said sadly that he was shocked to learn that Emerson had never slept under the stars³⁷ or tramped alone in the woods even in his youth. The visit left him with a feeling of frustration and loneliness so he quickly returned to his friends of the forest and mountains and built himself a cheerful fire. Here, he soon regained his perspective and was himself again amidst his beloved trees, birds, animals, and flowers.

We hated to leave this man with his loving appreciation of Nature in the rough, his skill and tenderness in handling all treasures,

36. The meeting occurred in 1871. Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson was sixty-eight and rapidly aging. At thirty-three, Muir was a relative youngster, in physical prime, and perhaps overly enthusiastic about the first meeting with his life-long hero. Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, pp. 145-51, and Turner, *Rediscovering America*, 213-19, go into the particulars of the two transcendentalists at Yosemite.

37. Not at all a happy woods-wanderer along the lines of his less reverent transcendental friend, Henry David Thoreau, still, Emerson was no stranger to the outdoors. True, he might be accused of preferring to philosophize delicately about nature more than he cared to stomp around in it; yet, he put in his time "under the stars." In a widely anthologized poem, for instance, he cheers over a camping trip taken in 1858 with none other than Louis Agassiz, several physicians, a judge, the brother of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and other Brahmins for companions—by its size alone a very unMuir-like expedition. (If memory serves me correctly, Longfellow also was invited, but upon hearing that Emerson planned to take his gun, the poet desisted, predicting gloomily, "Then someone will get shot.") There was a large measure of boyish frolic about the trip, though at the time Emerson was in his mid-fifties. In "The Adirondacs" he wrote in sheer pleasure of his temporary escape to the wilds: "Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft/In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed,/Lie here on hemlock-boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,/And greet unanimous the joyful change./So fast will Nature acclimate her sons,/Though late returning to her pristine ways."

Obviously, there's a certain amount of self-mocking going on here. Gay Wilson Allen gives the background of the blank-verse poem in *Waldo Emerson* (Viking, 1981), pp. 635-37.

combined with a remarkable power of description. I will miss his vibrant ability to entrance me with the unique facts as he presented them—and the delight of sharing with him these few experiences and the amazing meanings deduced from them.

All too soon the dreaded day arrived, and as we were leaving Mr. Muir had just finished showing us another of his Indian curios which he had rescued. Selecting a particularly fine ancient pottery water pitcher of a sandy gray color with a definite brown pattern of symmetrical rectangular designs, tepees, and sun burst drawings tied together by long garlands of brown, in a very good state of preservation, he handed it to me gently and said, "You may have this if you would like it." I was thrilled and all but speechless but managed to stammer a few, I hope, apropos words of thanks. However, our train was due and no time to wrap my treasure properly so I just took off my scarf and wrapped it around my beautiful pitcher, far from securely, and boarded the train.

All the way to Boston and home, in hotel stops, on the Pullmans, in the dining cars and in hacks, I carried my gift like a baby. I held it tightly, slept with it, and even ate with it. It was never checked, never out of my sight and caused many a laugh and curious glance wherever I went. No one could even guess what I had wrapped so flimsily in my scarf!

My care through the years has been truly rewarding as John Muir's wonderful gift is still in the family and ever our most prized possession!³⁸



As we have seen, despite the buoyancy of this portrait, Muir's visit to Arizona in 1905–1906 represents a nadir in his life. Concern over Helen's health wore on him. Worse was Louie's death. In the midst of it all, the shuttling back and forth between Martinez and Arizona to settle the estate and keep two households going must have drawn heavily on the reserves of an aging man. At one low point, he paused from studying fossils at Berkeley to write Helen:

38. It no doubt would please Alice Cotton Fletcher to know that her pot now is in the holdings of the John Muir National Historic Site, in Martinez, California.

I sit silent and alone from morn til eve in the deeper silence of the enchanted old old forests of the coal age. The hours go on neither long or short, glorious for imagination . . . but tough for the old paleontological body nearing 70. There's no fatness in this work—only leanness . . .³⁹

And though in August 1906 Muir returned to Martinez with a much improved Helen,⁴⁰ the year had brought other disruptions to the grieving man. In April, the San Francisco earthquake had Muir racing back to Martinez to survey the damage to his house. It was not as extensive as feared—the chimney required some work—but it was one more complication. In June, Wanda finally found the space in her life to marry her beau, civil engineer Thomas Hanna. The proud old explorer gave his daughter away; still, it was a loss to a man leaning more and more on his children for emotional support.⁴¹

Whatever the period of time at Adamana it covers, "Along the Way I Met John Muir" shows us none of the strain. It is not the portrait of a troubled man. Instead, Fletcher shows us an entertaining gentleman, indulgent of children, eager to hold forth on his interests. Regardless of his personal concerns and private griefs, Muir didn't spread his misery around. Once again, as was the pattern throughout his life, two seemingly opposing traits were bringing him through: his love of his fellow man and his love for the wilds. In this respect, Fletcher offers a personally telling portrait of John Muir.

The wider significance of Muir in Arizona, however, is not immediately apparent. As we've observed, Muir's was more than an enforced hiatus, more than a healing time for sorrow, a rest before he geared up for further writing and the last great battle of his life, the Hetch-Hetchy controversy. Alone out there among the windy stretches of Indian ruins, puzzling over bits of fossilized cycads, Muir wasn't simply dabbling therapeutically. He had a larger mind than that. The lover of glaciers and peaks had come down from his

39. Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, p. 306.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 307. Improved but not cured, pp. 309–10.

41. Clark and Sargent, *Dear Papa*, pp. 91–92, 94. Later, Helen also married. Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, p. 327.

accustomed haunts and become part of a movement then already underway, the appreciation of the Southwest's deserts.

Since their first contact with them, Americans had despised the arid places as hostile and useless—except for the gold and other resources that could be extracted and turned into dollars. By the closing years of the nineteenth century, though, the country's open spaces were filling up, and the mood began a shift from utilitarianism toward romanticism. The rapidly industrializing and populous nation started looking on deserts as its last wild, even mysterious, places.⁴²

The new appreciation had two components, the aesthetic and the scientific. As far back as 1875, John Wesley Powell, first explorer of the Grand Canyon's labyrinths and environs, combined the two impulses in his dramatic account of his expeditions.⁴³ Powell, however, with his emphasis on colorful adventures in an arid wilderness, was more a John the Baptist than a messiah. It wasn't until 1901, when an asthmatic art professor from Rutgers wandered enthralled through the Southwest, that a large part of the nation saw the forsaken places with new eyes, as beautiful in themselves. A man compelled toward the subtle desert hues, John C. Van Dyke wrote lushly about them. He proclaimed, "The desert has gone a-begging for a word of praise these many years. It never had a sacred poet; it has in me only a lover."⁴⁴ The country's romantic heart leapt at the words. Reflecting the radical change, soon after Van Dyke came Mary Austin, eventually Joseph Wood Krutch, and after him Edward Abbey—and with them a legion of authors creating a cult of arid-land admirers.

Science, too, played a large part as botanists and zoologists explained strange plants and animals to a wondering public. Geologists combed the Southwest, delighted that the cracked, barren, and

42. Excellent studies of the swing toward appreciation of wilderness may be found in Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, 1982); and Alfred Runte, *National Parks* (University of Nebraska Press, 1979). Patricia Limerick focuses on the new attitude toward arid landscapes in *Desert Passages* (University of New Mexico Press, 1985).

43. John Wesley Powell, *Exploration of the Colorado River of the West and its Tributaries* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1875). Historians of the period still take pleasure in the skilled analysis of Powell's contribution in Wallace Stegner's *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (Houghton Mifflin, 1953).

44. John C. Van Dyke, *The Desert* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), p. ix.

eroded land, as was the dramatic case at the Grand Canyon, readily showed the earth's primal bones. But perhaps it was anthropology that acted the foremost role in turning the focus from disdain to romance. The United States indulged itself with a convenient double standard about its native peoples. Once it conquered them, first through warfare and disease, then through undermining whatever culture remained, it next viewed them nostalgically, through a rose-tinted haze. In contrast to most of the nation, where tribes languished as mere shadows of their former selves, at century's turn the Southwest still harbored vital tribes. To a large degree, the Pueblo and other traditional peoples still lived the old ways of their ancestors. Living "close to the earth," as the phrase goes, they held out immense appeal to a soot-and-noise plagued society beginning to question the benefits of belching factories, crowded mill towns, and industrial regimentation. Not only that, the region boasted ancient ruins, timeless cliff dwellings, caves still holding friable corpses, thousands of unexplored sites filled with pottery! It was Egypt all over again.⁴⁵

Though Muir loved nature wherever he found it, the circumstances of 1905–1906 drew him into this "rediscovery" of America's arid region. We can lament the fact that later events prevented him from writing a substantive work on Arizona. Whether or not he discovered the Blue Forest portion of the area, as Lilian Whiting claims, is beside the point.⁴⁶ His interests in the largely unexplored rocky sweeps were broad and deep, but, as Alice Cotton Fletcher makes some to-do, they came accompanied by action. For as often occurs in social changes, the "rediscovery" brought the exploiters along with the appreciators. Hauling off colorful stone logs to grind into abrasives was bad enough. At Colorado's spectacular Mesa Verde ruin, vandals tore down roof beams of the irreplaceable Cliff Palace to use as firewood. Across the Southwest looters blasted

45. An often entertaining but sound account of an industrialized America's new love affair with the wilds eighty years ago is edited by Roderick Nash: *The Call of the Wild: 1900–1916* (George Braziller, 1970).

Readers will find two chapters of value in probing the Southwest's background in early archaeological and ethnological researches: "History of Archaeological Research," by Albert H. Schroeder, pp. 5–13, and "History of Ethnological Research," by Keith H. Basso, pp. 14–21, both in *Handbook of North American Indians*, Alfonso Ortiz, ed. (Smithsonian Institution, 1979), vol. 9. This and the following volume give a comprehensive overview of Southwestern Indian studies.

46. Whiting, *The Land of Enchantment*, p. 277.

petroglyphs and dug pots from ancient villages, then gleefully shipped crate on crate of treasure from the newly breached troves to avid collectors back East. Often, greed, not science, was the motive, for their methods, hasty and unmindful of context or labeling, robbed the artifacts of much of their archaeological significance.

For much of his life Muir had fought the despoilers in his beloved California Sierra. Now to good effect he turned the impulse on the Southwest. Added to the voices of other concerned citizens, his helped sway Congress into passage of the Antiquities Act of 1906. This proved to be a particularly handy tool. For now the president could instantly preserve federal lands of special natural or historic value by decree, thus bypassing the wearisome, time-consuming hassles of congressional debate. Soon after approval, Theodore Roosevelt leapt to the opportunity and set aside parts of the petrified forest as a national monument, and, again guided by Muir, he later added further portions.⁴⁷ Under provisions of the act, Roosevelt and subsequent presidents increased the nation's protected heritage by millions of acres, many of them in the Southwest, but ranging from Indian mounds in Georgia to the Statue of Liberty, from Death Valley to Alaska. This is the most enduring contribution of Muir from his Arizona days, as unsettling as they were, one far more enduring, he no doubt would agree, than ink and paper.❖

47. Frank Graham explains the political events surrounding the Antiquities Act in *Man's Dominion*, pp. 128–29. For Muir's role, see Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, pp. 306–7; and Turner, *Rediscovering America*, p. 334.