



## John Muir's Birthplace Fact Sheet

### Number 4.5 - John Muir the Writer

John Muir was familiar with both reading and writing at an early age. He came from an educated family. During his lifetime he wrote over 300 articles and 10 books. He wrote for pleasure, to teach others of the beauty of nature, to keep in touch with loved ones and as a campaigner, fighting to preserve the wilderness.



A pen, used by John Muir.  
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In his autobiography, 'My Boyhood and Youth', John tells us that his grandfather taught him to read his letters from the shop signs across the street. When he started school he carried his first book in a little green bag, hung around his neck.

John's father was deeply religious. By the time John was 11 he had learned *about three fourths of the Old Testament and all of the New by heart and by sore flesh*. There are many references to God and the Bible in his writings. He was also influenced by several famous poets and novelists. He enjoyed the works of both Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott.

John was a great letter writer. Throughout his travels he kept in touch with both family and friends, especially women. Many of his letters have survived. They include those written to his friend and mentor, Jeanne Carr.



Courtesy of the Bancroft Library  
University of California, Berkeley

While on his travels, John kept journals. His notebooks from his 1000 mile walk to the Gulf are just one example. They contain many drawings as well as descriptions of the trees and plants that he discovered.

In 1880 John married Louie Strenzel. He managed her father's fruit ranch at Martinez and was a successful businessman. Yet he missed the wilderness. He was also dismayed at the ruin caused by logging and sheep farming in his beloved Yosemite. He realised that it was not enough to study and record nature, but that he had to fight to preserve it.



Encouraged by Louie and his friends, John began to write. In 1890 he published 2 articles, 'Treasures of the Yosemite' and 'Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park'. Soon after, Yosemite became a National Park. Among John's friends was editor Robert Underwood Johnston. He published many of John's articles in his 'Century Magazine'.

John Muir's writings inspired many. They continue to be read worldwide. They also helped to create a conservation movement that lives to this day.

## Further Reading

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## Websites

- The Sierra Club [www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit)
- John Muir's Birthplace [www.jmbt.org.uk](http://www.jmbt.org.uk)
- John Muir National Historic Site, Martinez [www.nps.gov/jomu](http://www.nps.gov/jomu)