



Where is the Muir home?

John Muir NHS is located in Martinez, California. Muir chose to live in this urban environment because his wife Louie, **daughter of Polish 49er, Dr. John Strentzel**, was from here. Muir's in-laws, the Strentzels, finished their mansion after two years of construction in 1882. John Muir moved into the home with his wife and two girls in 1890. Muir lived and wrote in the home for the last 24 years of his life.

The site includes the Muir home, orchards, the Martinez Adobe and Mt. Wanda.



Mt. Wanda

Originally part of the 2600 acre ranch, John Muir NHS acquired this 326 acres of oak woodland in 1993. **Named for his oldest daughter**, Muir took both girls on nature walks here to look at the trees, wildflowers and birds. We continue that tradition today with ranger led wildflower and bird walks in the spring, and full moon walks in the summer.

In the mid-1870s, Muir became acquainted with Dr. John **Strentzel**, a Forty-Niner, Polish refugee, physician and prominent horticulturalist, who lived in the Alhambra Valley, today's Martinez. Friends played matchmaker between Muir and Strentzel's daughter, Louie Wanda, an accomplished pianist and businesswoman, who helped to manage the family farm. Although Muir did not like the trappings of civilization, he longed for the warmth of a family. He married Louie Strentzel in 1880 and became the successful and fairly wealthy manager of the Strentzel orchards and vineyards, a position he would hold for the next seven years. In the late 1880s, Louie Muir knew that her husband needed to return to the mountains and outdoors for long periods of time and encouraged him to do so. Relatives and hired workers helped her with farm management, and she sold part of the acreage.

John Muir's father-in-law was a Polish Forty-Niner

MUIR FAMILY STATISTICS

JOHN MUIR

Born: April 21, 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland.

Father: Daniel Muir died 1885.

Mother: Ann Gilrye Muir died 1896.

Married Louie Wanda Strentzel on April 14, 1880.

Louie died in 1905 at age 59.

John Muir died in 1914 at age 76.

John Muir's Children

Wanda, March 25, 1881 - July, 1942 (age 60)

Helen, January 23, 1886 - June, 1964 (age 78)

John Muir's Grandchildren

Wanda married Thomas Hanna in 1906 and had six children

John Hanna - lives in Napa, CA (as of 2004)

Ross Hanna - lives in Dixon, CA (as of 2004)

Richard Hanna - deceased 5/9/92.

Strentzel Hanna - deceased.

Bob Hanna - deceased.

Jean Hanna deLipkau Clark - deceased. (Only granddaughter)

Helen married Buel Funk and had four children (Helen and three of her sons changed their name from Funk to Muir in 1940)

Walter Muir - Stan Muir - deceased.

John Muir - deceased.

Muir Funk - deceased.

Strentzel-Muir House

Dr. John Strentzel, John Muir's father-in-law, built the John Muir House in 1882. When Dr. Strentzel died in 1890, Mrs. Strentzel invited the Muir's to move into the "big house" with her. This was to be John Muir's home for the last 24 years of his life.

The "big house" is a 17-room wood frame mansion of the late Victorian period (Italianate style) built on a knoll with a commanding view of Alhambra Valley. It is a two story structure with a full basement and attic, a cupola on the peak of the roof, 12 foot high ceilings in the rooms, and over 10,000 square feet of floor space. The house was designed by architects Wolfe and Son of San Francisco and built by contractors Sylvester and Langabee of the same city.

The first floor contains an entrance hall, formal parlor, library with partially enclosed porch, kitchen; dining room with attached conservatory and family parlor. There were originally two water closets, one having been removed by John Muir in 1906.

The second floor has six bedrooms, one water closet and one bathroom. Three bedrooms have been restored: Muir's, the children's and the guestroom'. One large bedroom was converted to a study by John Muir and has been restored as such. The remaining room contains Sierra Club material.

The house cost over \$20,000 to build and furnish, and included such conveniences as indoor plumbing and gas lighting. There was a telephone in the house as early as 1884. John Muir had an electrical system installed just before his death in 1914.

Water for the indoor plumbing was provided by rainwater collected from the roof, or pumped from one of the three wells located near the house, and stored in redwood tanks in the attic. Any overflow went to a large brick cistern under the kitchen floor. Sometime after 1890, John Muir added a three-story addition to the back of the house that supports a large steel water tank in the attic.

There were originally seven imported Italian marble fireplaces of which only three remain. Two others were converted to brick and two were removed. The large family parlor fireplace is in the mission style that Muir had built after the original fireplace was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. Muir also opened up the two first floor parlors with large archways and a smaller one into the dining room during house repairs.

The house has remained largely unaltered structurally since Muir's time. The National Park Service has been involved in an on-going restoration program on the house and surrounding grounds since the house was declared a National Historic Site in 1964. Period furniture and artifacts have been used whenever possible, with reproduction wall and floor coverings and paintings to reflect the historic period.

Martinez Adobe

Doctor John Strentzel, father-in-law of John Muir, purchased the Martinez Adobe in December 1874. Dr. Strentzel is often called **the father of California Horticulture**. A fruit rancher, Strentzel used the Adobe as a storehouse and residence for his employees, usually the overseers, since the Chinese laborers had buildings of their own. Strentzel may have lived in the Adobe for a short time, while awaiting completion of his mansion on a nearby hill in 1883.

During the 1800's, the fruit ranch, under Muir's direction, was operating very successfully and on a large scale. Some of the employees lived in a two-story building just west of the Adobe. The Chinese had their homes along the creek southwest of the mansion, and there were barns and ranch buildings in back of the Adobe.

In the latter portion of 1906, Muir's daughter, Wanda and her new husband Tom, moved into the adobe and remained until 1915.

Since Muir's death in 1914, the Adobe has had many owners, including a tailor who used part of it as a shop. The downstairs west bedroom, the downstairs bath, toilet, lavatory, laundry room, concrete deck and wall were all added after Muir's time. Concerned citizen, Louis Stein helped save the Adobe from destruction in 1955, and in 1966, it became the property of the National Park Service.

More than a century has passed since Don Vicente Martinez built his home on California soil. Five generations of Americans have owned the Adobe and witnessed great changes in the county, state, and in the nation itself. In viewing the Adobe today, we hope that you can take time to reflect on life in 19th century America, how our ancestors influenced our lives, and how we may affect the lives of future generations.