

The Twin Yosemite Meetings of John Muir: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Roosevelt

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HIS 317: Gilded Age & Progressive Era

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March 16, 2022

## Introduction

John Muir, founder of the Sierra club, architect of Yosemite National Park, and world-famous writer, was not always the conservation movement leader he would eventually become. In 1871 Muir was working as a sawmiller and shepherd in Yosemite. He had moved there after dropping out of the University of Wisconsin after just two years. Muir was born in Scotland in 1838 and moved to Wisconsin at the age of eleven. After his stint in college, which ended in 1863, he took a number of jobs and traveled to a wide variety of places, including Ontario, Cuba, Panama, and eventually Yosemite. He enjoyed Yosemite so much, he decided to return there in 1870 at the age of thirty-two.<sup>1</sup> At this point in his life, Muir was not particularly accomplished in anything. He had not published anything of note, nor had he started any environmental societies, nor had he met any influential people. That would begin to change in 1871 in a number of ways. Firstly, Muir would publish his first academic article “Yosemite Glaciers” in the *New York Tribune*, where he mixed scientific research with beautiful descriptions of the land. Muir had a lifelong fascination with campfires. In his first work he wrote of one:

Grandly do my logs give back their light, slow gleaned from the suns of a hundred summers, garnered beautifully away in dotted cells and in beads of amber gum; and, together with this outgust of light, seems to flow all the other riches of their life, and their living companions are looking down as if to witness their perfect and beautiful death.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly and perhaps more importantly, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Muir’s idol, would visit Yosemite and meet John Muir. This meeting symbolized where John Muir was career-wise in many ways. He was eager to meet his idol, but initially shy. He begged Emerson to go camping with him, but was politely declined by Emerson’s traveling company due to Emerson’s old age of

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<sup>1</sup> Lex Chalmers, “Writing Waikato: John Muir’s Contribution to Environmental Awareness,” *Journal of New Zealand Literature (JNZL)*, no. 29 (2011): 109-110.

<sup>2</sup> John Muir, “Yosemite Glaciers,” *New York Tribune*, 5 December 1871, [https://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/yosemite\\_glaciers.aspx](https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/yosemite_glaciers.aspx).

sixty-eight. Overall, the meeting left Muir with a sense of sadness and disappointment.<sup>3</sup> Thirty-two years later, Muir would have another meeting with another influential figure, Theodore Roosevelt. Muir's meeting with Roosevelt went very differently than it had with Emerson. It took place in 1903 at the height of Muir's career and influence, he was nearly the same age as Emerson had been on his visitation all those years ago. And not only did Roosevelt camp with Muir, something Emerson did not do, but multiple environmental initiatives, including the nationalization of Yosemite Park, resulted from the trip.<sup>4</sup> This brought joy and jubilation to Muir instead of sadness and disappointment. The two parallel visitations from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir and the different relationships that resulted illustrate two extremes in Muir's life, the excited dreamer who was influenced by Emerson, and the accomplished conservationist who influenced Roosevelt.

### **Historiography**

John Muir is an incredibly widely studied figure. His influence on the American conservation movement is well known and confirmed by many scholars. Thus, there are many works written about John Muir focusing on different aspects of his career and writings. John Muir himself is also widely published with hundreds of academic articles and twelve books. Many of his letters and personal journals are also well-preserved, leaving a lot of primary source material to analyze. Since this paper looks at two specific and relatively important events in Muir's life, nearly every longer work about him covers one or both of them, each source ascribing various levels of importance. *The Life and Adventures of John Muir* by J.M. Clarke

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<sup>3</sup> John Muir, *Our National Parks*, 1901, in *The Wisdom of John Muir: 100 Selections from the Letters, Journals, and Essays of the Great Naturalist*, ed. Anne Rowthorn and Bill McKibben (New York: Wilderness Press, 2012), 94-96.

<sup>4</sup> Holway R. Jones, *John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1965), 64.

includes both events and emphasizes the friendships developed in both instances. Lex Chalmer's article "Writing Waikato: John Muir's Contribution to Environmental Awareness" focuses on Muir's time in New Zealand, but offers a concise overview of his life from a non-American perspective. *The Wisdom of John Muir: 100 Selections from the Letters, Journals, and Essays of the Great Naturalist* by Anne Rowthorn and Bill McKibben, along with providing numerous primary source writings, also discusses Muir's accomplishments and comments on his meeting with Emerson. *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography* by Steven J. Holmes is a longer work that covers Muir's Emerson meeting but not the Roosevelt meeting because the book focuses on the first half of Muir's life, and Michael Branch's article "'Angel Guiding Gently': The Yosemite Meeting of Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Muir, 1871" specifically covers Muir's meeting with Emerson, and the effects it had on his life. Similarly, Barb Rosenstock's "Friendship under Five Inches of Snow: Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir in Yosemite" specifically focuses on the camping trip with Roosevelt, and *John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite* by Holway R. Jones covers Muir's later relationship with Roosevelt, and how the Sierra Club intersects with it. Despite all of these writers emphasizing the importance of these two meetings in various ways, no source currently available has correlated and compared the two meetings, at least to any substantial extent.

### **Muir and Emerson**

In 1871 Ralph Waldo Emerson was giving a series of lectures at Harvard about the Natural History of Intellect. For a man in his late sixties on the wind-down of a vigorous career, this was getting exhausting, so his son-in-law, William Forbes, organized a trip to the West (including Yosemite) to get his mind off of work and to take a break. John Muir found out about this visit from a friend and professor he had at the University of Wisconsin, but he was too shy to

reach out to Emerson.<sup>5</sup> This was likely because Emerson was a cultural icon. His work was known far and wide, it would have been difficult to find someone who was interested in conservation or natural science who did not know who Emerson was. As J.M. Clarke put it, “it was almost as if he had been canonized by popular acclaim.”<sup>6</sup> Steven J. Holmes in his book *The Young John Muir* argues that Muir may not have been very well-read on Emerson by the time of his visit, and that he may have known him only through popular acclaim and culture.<sup>7</sup> This is unlikely because Muir had an annotated copy of Emerson’s *The Song of Nature* that he was given in 1869 (that Emerson gave him another copy of in 1872).<sup>8</sup> He also was very well-read in general, and said himself in his book *Our Natural Parks* that he had “read his [Emerson’s] essays, and felt sure that of all men he would best interpret the sayings of these noble mountains and trees.” He also wrote that he consistently quoted Emerson’s “wood-notes” to him while he was visiting.<sup>9</sup> In fact, it is quite clear in *Our Natural Parks*, Muir’s journals, and his letters to Emerson that Muir saw him as quite the idol.

When Emerson was about to leave the area, Muir finally worked up the courage to write to Emerson and ask him to visit. Muir wrote his letter in a reverent tone, using his poetic nature to beg Emerson to visit:

Do not thus drift away with the mob while the Spirits of these rocks & waters hail you after long waiting as their kinsman & persuade you to closer communion... In the name of the grand upper forests... & in the name of all the spirit Creatures of these rocks & of this whole spiritual atmosphere Do not leave us now.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Michael P. Branch, ““Angel Guiding Gently’: The Yosemite Meeting of Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Muir, 1871” in *Western American Literature* 32, no. 2 (1997): 128-129.

<sup>6</sup> J.M. Clarke, *The Life and Adventures of John Muir* (San Diego: The Word Shop, Inc., 1979), 92.

<sup>7</sup> Steven J. Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 221.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>9</sup> Muir, *Our National Parks*, 94-95.

<sup>10</sup> John Muir to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Letter, May 8, 1871, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/1374/>.

Emerson, likely impressed by Muir's writing, delayed his leave and visited Muir the next day. Muir showed him his drawings and dried plants, and even offered them to Emerson. They spent a good deal of time together that day and the next, where they left quite the impression on each other.<sup>11</sup> Muir in particular was enthralled with Emerson. In his journal he wrote,

Emerson was the most serene, majestic, sequoia-like soul I ever met. His smile was as sweet and calm as morning light on mountains. There was a wonderful charm in his presence; his smile, serene eye, his voice, his manner, were all sensed at once by everybody. I felt here was the man I had been seeking.<sup>12</sup>

Emerson found admiration in John Muir as well. When he got home, he added Muir to a list of friends he found excellent called "My Men."<sup>13</sup>

When Emerson was about to leave, he invited Muir to join his party until they reached Mariposa, where they would depart. Muir agreed to accompany him if Emerson would go out camping with him for at least a night. Muir wrote that Emerson "consented heavily" but on the next day, after spending the day together touring the area, Emerson and his party prepared to leave. According to Muir, the party claimed this was because Emerson was getting old and they did not want him to catch a cold. Muir was distraught, he urged his new friend multiple times to stay, but to no avail.<sup>14</sup>

Steven Holmes in *The Young John Muir* saw a controlling and possessive nature in Muir in his repeated attempts to convince (or nearly demand) Emerson to stay with him longer.<sup>15</sup>

While this is true to some extent, Holmes believes this was because Muir was trying to bring Emerson down as his equal, or to identify with him.<sup>16</sup> This idea rings true when looking only at Muir's demands, but considering Muir's general praise and reverence for Emerson (often calling

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<sup>11</sup> Branch, "Angel," 129-130.

<sup>12</sup> John Muir, Journal Entry, Date unknown, in *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir* ed. Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1938), 436.

<sup>13</sup> Clarke, *Life and Adventures*, 93.

<sup>14</sup> Muir, *Our National Parks*, 94.

<sup>15</sup> Holmes, *The Young*, 221.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

him a sequoia, a tree Muir held in high esteem), it seems more likely that Muir's possessiveness was more akin to a child looking up to a father figure (or a fan looking up to an idol) than some sort of competitiveness. This was especially true in that Muir had not published anything by this time or accomplished anything of note. He would not have wanted to bring Emerson down to his level; rather, he would have looked up to him.

The night that Emerson left, Muir lamented the "inspiring fire" they would not get to share.<sup>17</sup> As Michale P. Branch notes, it is unclear how much Emerson truly wanted to camp with Muir, though Muir consistently claimed throughout his life that Emerson wanted to join him.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Muir did not blame Emerson for not camping, but harshly criticized his party. He wrote, "his party, full of indoor philosophy, failed to see the natural beauty and fullness of promise of my wild plan, and laughed at it in good-natured ignorance" and called Emerson "a child in the hands of his affectionate but sadly civilized friends."<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, upon Emerson's leave Muir found himself sad and disappointed, thinking that of all people, Emerson would have been the quickest to see the mountains in the same way he did.<sup>20</sup> Muir wrote,

After sundown I built a great fire, and as usual had it all to myself. And though lonesome for the first time in these forests, I quickly took heart again... Emerson was still with me in spirit, though I never again saw him in the flesh.<sup>21</sup>

Despite never seeing him again, Muir and Emerson kept up a correspondence, sending each other letters, books, and even samples collected on the field. Their correspondence was somewhat one-sided, Muir sending more letters to Emerson than the other way around. Only one letter from Emerson to Muir survives. In it, Emerson wrote asking Muir to come visit him in Boston, saying

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<sup>17</sup> Muir, *Our National Parks*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> Branch, "Angel," 131.

<sup>19</sup> Muir, *Our National Parks*, 95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

“I have everywhere testified to my friends, who should also be yours, my happiness in finding you,”<sup>22</sup> and Muir wrote Emerson a very long letter begging Emerson to come back to Yosemite.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of their wishes to see one another again, it never did happen, though Muir did visit Emerson’s grave in 1893, eleven years after his death. Emerson clearly had a profound impact on Muir, and for the rest of his life he carried around Emerson’s works with him (though he frequently disagreed with his ideas as evidenced by his writings in the margins) and often used Emersonian ideas in his own writings.<sup>24</sup>

### **Muir and Roosevelt**

In the thirty-two years between Muir’s meeting with Emerson and his camping trip with Roosevelt, Muir became a glaciologist, botanist, geologist, writer, preservationist, and someone twenty-first century writers could retroactively say about him, “no single American has done more to preserve our wilderness than John Muir.”<sup>25</sup> From the publication of his first article until his founding of the Sierra club in 1892, Muir published sixty-five more articles in various magazines and newspapers, some very influential.<sup>26</sup> Two years previously, the Yosemite Park was founded by Congress, and then in 1894, Muir published his first book. At first, he was apprehensive about publishing his works in book form, but when publisher Robert Underwood visited him in Yosemite, he was convinced. His first book was called *The Mountains of California*, which described nature with prose-poetry and was immediately successful.<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson to John Muir, Letter, Feb 5, 1872, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/1425/>.

<sup>23</sup> John Muir to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Letter, Mar 18, 1872, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/1435/>.

<sup>24</sup> Branch, “Angel,” 141, 143.

<sup>25</sup> Rowthorn and McKibben, *Wisdom*, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Holway R. Jones, *John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1965), 7.

<sup>27</sup> Rowthorn and McKibben, *Wisdom*, 3.

book revealed Muir's complicated relationship with fires, as he wrote extensively about forest fires as well as his comfort at his own campfires.<sup>28</sup>

Muir also published his book *Our National Parks* in 1901, which happened to be picked up and read by Theodore Roosevelt while he was in office as President.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Roosevelt may have been a fan of all of Muir's books.<sup>30</sup> In *Our National Parks*, Muir advocated for the preservation of America's wild places on the federal level, heavily focusing on Yosemite. He wrote of the trees in the Sierra, "God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand straining, leveling tempests and floods; but he cannot save them from fools -- only Uncle Sam can do that."<sup>31</sup> At the time, Muir and the Sierra club were advocating for the nationalization of Yosemite Park, which had fallen under the control of the State of California. Roosevelt happened to agree with Emerson on the nationalization of the park. Even as far back as 1894 he expressed this opinion in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior when he was the Governor of New York.<sup>32</sup>

After reading Muir's book in 1903, Roosevelt wrote a letter to him asking for him to take Roosevelt camping in Yosemite: "I do not want anyone with me but you, and I want to drop politics absolutely for four days and just be out in the open with you."<sup>33</sup> Already one can see the differences between Muir's meeting with Emerson and his meeting with Roosevelt. In the case with Emerson, Muir practically begged his idol as a fan to come visit with him. In the case with

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<sup>28</sup> John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (New York: The Century Co, 1894), [https://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/the\\_mountains\\_of\\_california/](https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/the_mountains_of_california/).

<sup>29</sup> Rowthron and McKibben, *Wisdom*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Barb Rosenstock, "Friendship under Five Inches of Snow: Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir in Yosemite" in *Theodore Roosevelt, Naturalist in the Arena*, ed. Char Miller and Clay S. Jenkinson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 124.

<sup>31</sup> John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1901), ch. 10, [https://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/our\\_national\\_parks/](https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/).

<sup>32</sup> Jones, *Sierra Club*, 55, 64.

<sup>33</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir, Letter, Mar 14, 1903, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/2555/>.

Roosevelt, the President of the United States himself was a fan of Muir's work and not only wanted to come visit him, but wanted to camp with him, which Emerson did not do. At the time, Muir was about to tour Asia with Professor Saget of Harvard, and was actually apprehensive about meeting with Roosevelt because he was growing tired of politics, but a camping trip with the President was too great of an opportunity to pass up.<sup>34</sup> Muir sent a letter back to Roosevelt explaining his situation with the professor, but accepted his invitation gladly.<sup>35</sup>

Muir and Roosevelt took the same train out west, but by the time Roosevelt boarded the train, Muir was already asleep. They must have met at some point the next morning. On the first night at Yosemite, fireworks and speeches in the President's honor were planned, but Muir and Roosevelt crept away and spent the night out in the wilderness.<sup>36</sup> The pair spent three nights camping together under the redwoods at Mariposa Grove and in the snowy Glacier Point at Yosemite valley. Muir did a lot of the talking on the visit, informing Roosevelt of various conservation problems.<sup>37</sup> The two became friends as they talked about what other parts of the US should be turned into national parks, and competed with one another over who could identify the most bird calls (Roosevelt won).<sup>38</sup> One night, quite characteristic of Muir's love for fires, Muir lit a giant bonfire from a dead pine tree for Roosevelt. Roosevelt was greatly enthused and had a wonderful time.<sup>39</sup> At long last, Muir had a friend he could share a fire with. Long gone were the days of lonesomely sitting at his own fire, wishing Emerson or some other similar-minded person could share his fire and his wilderness. Muir had found that person in Roosevelt. Shortly

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<sup>34</sup> Rosenstock, "Friendship," 128.

<sup>35</sup> John Muir to Theodore Roosevelt, Letter, Mar 27, 1903, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/2570/>.

<sup>36</sup> Rosenstock, "Friendship," 129.

<sup>37</sup> Clarke, *Life and Adventures*, 292-293.

<sup>38</sup> Rosenstock, "Friendship," 130-131.

<sup>39</sup> Clarke, *Life and Adventures*, 292-293.

after the trip, he told his wife he had fallen in love with Roosevelt, and Roosevelt later called his time with Muir the one time in his life he would remember with pleasure.<sup>40</sup>

From a conservation perspective, it is quite good that Muir did go on the trip with Roosevelt, because it seemed to confirm a lot to Roosevelt's mind, and influenced his future political decisions. Even immediately after the trip, Roosevelt began to use Muir-like rhetoric in his speeches when addressing nature preservation.<sup>41</sup> He also gave high acclaim to the Sierra club in a speech at Stanford University about a month later. By camping with Muir in Yosemite, Roosevelt confirmed his convictions about the nationalization of Yosemite Park, and prioritized the project. By 1906 Yosemite was under national control once again.<sup>42</sup> Roosevelt worked on other national parks as well, setting aside 148 million acres of land for the creation of new parks, which was three times more land than the three preceding presidents set aside combined.<sup>43</sup> It is safe to say that at least some of Roosevelt's great environmental efforts during his Presidency stemmed and took influence from his camping trip with John Muir.

Much like Muir and Emerson, Muir and Roosevelt kept up a correspondence. But while Muir's correspondence with Emerson lasted only a few years after Emerson's visit, the last recorded message between Muir and Roosevelt was in 1912, nine years after Roosevelt's camping trip and two years before Muir died. The letters were also much more reciprocal, both having sent one another similar amounts of letters. Unfortunately, the letters exchanged between Muir and Roosevelt were not always in agreement. This was due to the Hetch Hetchy debate. Muir and the Sierra club were against damming Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite and turning it into a water reservoir for the people of San Diego, while Roosevelt generally sided with the damming.

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<sup>40</sup> Rosenstock, "Friendship," 134.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135.

<sup>42</sup> Jones, *Sierra Club*, 21, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Clarke, *Life*, 294.

In a letter espousing the beauty of Yosemite and the tragedy it would be to change the landscape of Hetch Hetchy, Muir urged the President to put a stop to the issue. At the end of the letter he reminded Roosevelt of their time in Yosemite by wishing for a “tranquil camp hour” they could share once again in the wilderness.<sup>44</sup> Roosevelt responded with a short letter assuring Muir (quite halfheartedly) that he would do what he could, but that “I must see that San Francisco has an adequate water supply.”<sup>45</sup> This disagreement seems to center on the main difference between John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt’s environmentalism. Muir was a preservationist; he believed in saving nature for the sake of nature. Roosevelt was more of a utilitarian conservationist, someone who focuses more on nature’s importance to humankind.<sup>46</sup> This caused Muir to respond to the President with an official letter from the Sierra club itself, which held an economic argument as to why Hetch Hetchy was important, something that might hold more weight for Roosevelt.<sup>47</sup> Despite this, Roosevelt went through with allowing a permit to be issued regarding the building of a Hetch Hetchy dam (potentially due to commitments to political allies), but construction did not actually start until five years later, causing Muir to resign his presidency at the Sierra club and to forego his membership, but this was long after Roosevelt’s terms were completed.<sup>48</sup>

Despite their political and environmental disagreements, Muir and Roosevelt stayed on good terms until Muir’s death. After Muir’s wife died in 1905, Roosevelt wrote to Muir to comfort him and emphasize his own grief. He gave Muir the advice to “Get out among the mountains and the trees, friend, as soon as you can. They will do more for you than either man or

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<sup>44</sup> John Muir to Theodore Roosevelt, Letter, Apr 21, 1908, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/5362/>.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir, Letter, Apr 27, 1908, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/5378/>.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, *Sierra Club*, 94.

<sup>47</sup> John Muir et al to Theodore Roosevelt, Letter, May 2, 1908, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/5391/>.

<sup>48</sup> Clarke, *Life and Adventures*, 306, 309.

woman could.”<sup>49</sup> Likewise, years later after Roosevelt’s presidency had ended, John Muir wrote to him that “somehow the whole country seems lonesome to me since you left Washington.”<sup>50</sup> The last words Muir ever sent to Roosevelt were in 1912 in the form of a telegram after the attempted assassination of Roosevelt. Muir simply gave his “profound sympathy,” wished him a quick recovery, and implied the nation was better off with Roosevelt still alive.<sup>51</sup>

### **Emerson and Roosevelt**

The book that prompted Theodore Roosevelt to send John Muir an invitation to go camping together was *Our National Parks*, the same book where Muir most fully recounted his visit with Emerson and his disappointment in his leaving. Roosevelt never mentioned Emerson to Muir in any of his letters except once in 1908 where he wrote in the postscript, “I always grudged Emerson's not having gone into camp with you. You would have made him perfectly comfortable and he ought to have had the experience.”<sup>52</sup> This small afterthought in a letter years after their camping trip provides some interesting information. Firstly, if it was not already abundantly clear, this note confirms how valuable Roosevelt found his camping trip with Muir, so much so that he thought others should have the experience, and he grudged Emerson for not having it. Secondly, it raises the question of why he did go camping with Muir. Perhaps after reading Muir’s book, Roosevelt sought to make up for Emerson’s mistake in some way. Maybe Roosevelt, reading *Our National Parks*, decided he would not make the same mistake as

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<sup>49</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir, Letter, Aug 17, 1905, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/3401/>.

<sup>50</sup> John Muir to Theodore Roosevelt, Letter, Mar 11, 1909, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/5716/>.

<sup>51</sup> John Muir to Theodore Roosevelt, Telegram, Oct 15, 1912, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/6377/>.

<sup>52</sup> Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir, Letter, Jan 27, 1908, *University of the Pacific*, <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/muir-correspondence/5255/>.

Emerson. No matter Roosevelt's reason, the relationship developed between the pairs of men were very different, and the future outcomes of both trips were different as well.

After Emerson's visit to Yosemite, Muir started to kick off his career. He published his first article only a couple months later, and began to be known in the scientific community at first as a glaciologist.<sup>53</sup> Muir would eventually become known for much more, but Emerson's visit more than likely influenced him to start publishing. It was the reverse in relation to Muir and Roosevelt. After their trip, it was Roosevelt, not Muir, who began changing, as he almost immediately started strengthening his conservation efforts.<sup>54</sup> It is safe to say that Muir had a similar effect on Roosevelt as Emerson had on Muir.

Although Muir took the same role of an influencer to Roosevelt as Emerson originally did to Muir, their actual relationships with one another were quite different. Muir very much idolized Emerson and held him to a high standard. This is why he was so disappointed when Emerson did not live up to his rugged expectations.<sup>55</sup> Roosevelt exceeded Muir's expectations. This is evident by Muir initially not wanting to camp with Roosevelt, but ending up finding a friendship with him and an admiration that would continue for years. Emerson was also significantly more famous than Muir, but Roosevelt and Muir were both very well known by the time of Roosevelt's visit. This made the relationship between Muir and Emerson somewhat of a father-son relationship, or at least something of a fan-idol relationship. But as for Muir and Emerson, their relationship was more brotherly and based on equality. Muir was not trying to impress Roosevelt, nor did he write about him in reverent tones. They simply had a lot in common, and Roosevelt learned from Muir's wisdom.

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<sup>53</sup> Chalmers, "Writing Waikato," 110.

<sup>54</sup> Wolfe, *John of the Mountains*, 427.

<sup>55</sup> Muir, *Our National Parks*, 95-96.

## **Conclusion**

John Muir did a lot for the conservation movement in the United States and the development of national parks. Americans today have Muir to thank in-part for Yosemite National Park, his Sierra Club has stayed relevant and influential even today, and his writings continue to enthrall people all over the world. His life and career may have gone differently if he had never met and taken inspiration from Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Theodore Roosevelt's conservation efforts may have been reduced had he never experienced a true John Muir bonfire in the midst of the Sierra. The moments Muir had with both men and the relationships that developed in turn were very different but valuable in their own ways, Emerson an idol and an influence, and Roosevelt a friend.