

*A Design Plan for the  
John Muir National Historic Site,  
Gravesite Unit*

*John Muir*  
*JOHN MUIR*

*Reflections of a Man*

*By  
Christine Breining*

*for*

*University of California, Davis  
Landscape Architecture  
June 2008*

*“The grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never dried all at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.”*

*John Muir, John of the Mountains.*

# *Reflections of a Man*

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*John Muir*  
*John Muir*

## *A Design Plan for the John Muir National Historic Site, Gravesite Unit*

A Senior Project  
Presented to the Faculty of the Landscape Architecture Program  
University of California, Davis  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelors of Science of Landscape Architecture

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By  
*Christine Breining*  
*June 2008*

# Reflections of a Man

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A HUGE thank you to the members of my committee...

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Patsy Owens  
Rob Thayer  
Christina Reyes  
Lucy Lawliss  
and Steve McNiel

For helping me with this project; keeping me focused and grounded.

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My mother, who made up for my absence from my kids with her love and encouragement. I could not have done it without you.

Lisa, The best sister anyone could have, thanks for being my editor, cheerleader and task-master all rolled in one.



## DEDICATION

To the Memory of John Muir

who opened the eyes of the world to the beauty and importance of the earth in all its natural glory, and to all those who have the vision to see beyond themselves and carry on his work.

To Spencer and Samuel

who so patiently and proudly watched as I embarked on this journey; You are what kept me going even when it seemed too much of a sacrifice. Forgive me for sometimes being too busy to play.

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## ABSTRACT

*“The evening flames with purple and gold...the mighty host of trees baptized in the purple flood stand hushed and thoughtful, awaiting the sun’s blessing and farewell.”*

*John Muir, Our National Parks, Pg.82*

The focus of this project is to develop a design plan for the John Muir Gravesite, which is one of the three land units comprising the John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez, California. This project addresses the need for a comprehensive design which concentrates on rehabilitating the historical and natural resources of the site as well as creating an interpretive visitor program.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.*

*John Muir- John of the Mountains (1938), page 313.*

I was drawn to this project because it contained three components of Landscape design that are of great interest to me: A historical landscape, a project which has environmental significance, and a design program. All of these things make up the The John Muir National Historic Site.

John Muir (1838-1914) is America’s most famous and influential naturalist and preservationist. He has been called “The Father of our National Parks.” He has walked with Presidents for the sake of the trees and mountains and influenced those who had the power to create changes in the way our country viewed it’s wildlands. He was at the forefront of the environmental movement. At a time when the country was industrializing, John Muir was discovering the importance of leaving some lands untouched for the enjoyment of their intrinsic beauty. He saw that “the wedges of development are being driven hard and none of the obstacles of nature can long withstand the march of this immeasurable industry.” During his lifetime John Muir influenced the establishment of five National Parks, twenty-three National Monuments, and 148 million acres of National Forest. His writings contributed to the creation of Yosemite, Sequoia, Mount Rainier, Petrified Forest, and Grand Canyon National Parks.

The John Muir National Historic Site was the home and ranch of Dr. John Strentzel who would become John Muir’s father-in-law. John Muir lived, ranched and raised his family at this site in Martinez, CA . until his death in 1914. Over a period of time, separate land units of the original Strentzel-Muir ranch were acquired by the National Park Service. My project focuses on one of these land units, the Gravesite unit.

The purpose of my project is to create an interpretive design program for the gravesite unit which would help to unify the visitor program between all three land units within the John Muir National Historic Site (JMNHS) while staying true to Muir's ideals.

In creating this design I am creating an opportunity to experience a more personal relationship with John Muir and his connection with the earth. The JMNHS greets approximately 35,000 visitors a year about 33% of which are elementary school age visitors. Through the interpretive program, I am orchestrating a personal journey where one can contemplate and explore the world, as John Muir saw it, in the place where he lived and died. My hope is that his words and the beauty of the land, preserved in his honor, will inspire people to learn more about his work and continue his dream of preserving our wildlands for future generations.



Figure 1.1: John Muir, 1893.

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## HISTORY

*“In God’s wildness lies the hope of the world - the great fresh, unblighted, unredeemed wilderness. The galling harness of civilization drops off, and wounds heal ere we are aware.*

*- John Muir-John of the Mountains, (1938) page 317.*

The history of the land in California’s Central Valley was shaped by its inhabitants. As with all evolutionary processes, the physical and cultural changes of the land and its people were intertwined. The transformation of the landscape from the time of the Native American settlements to the time of John Muir was dramatic. The land changed from that of abundant natural resources used for hunting and gathering, to the use of widespread grazing and cultivation of crops.



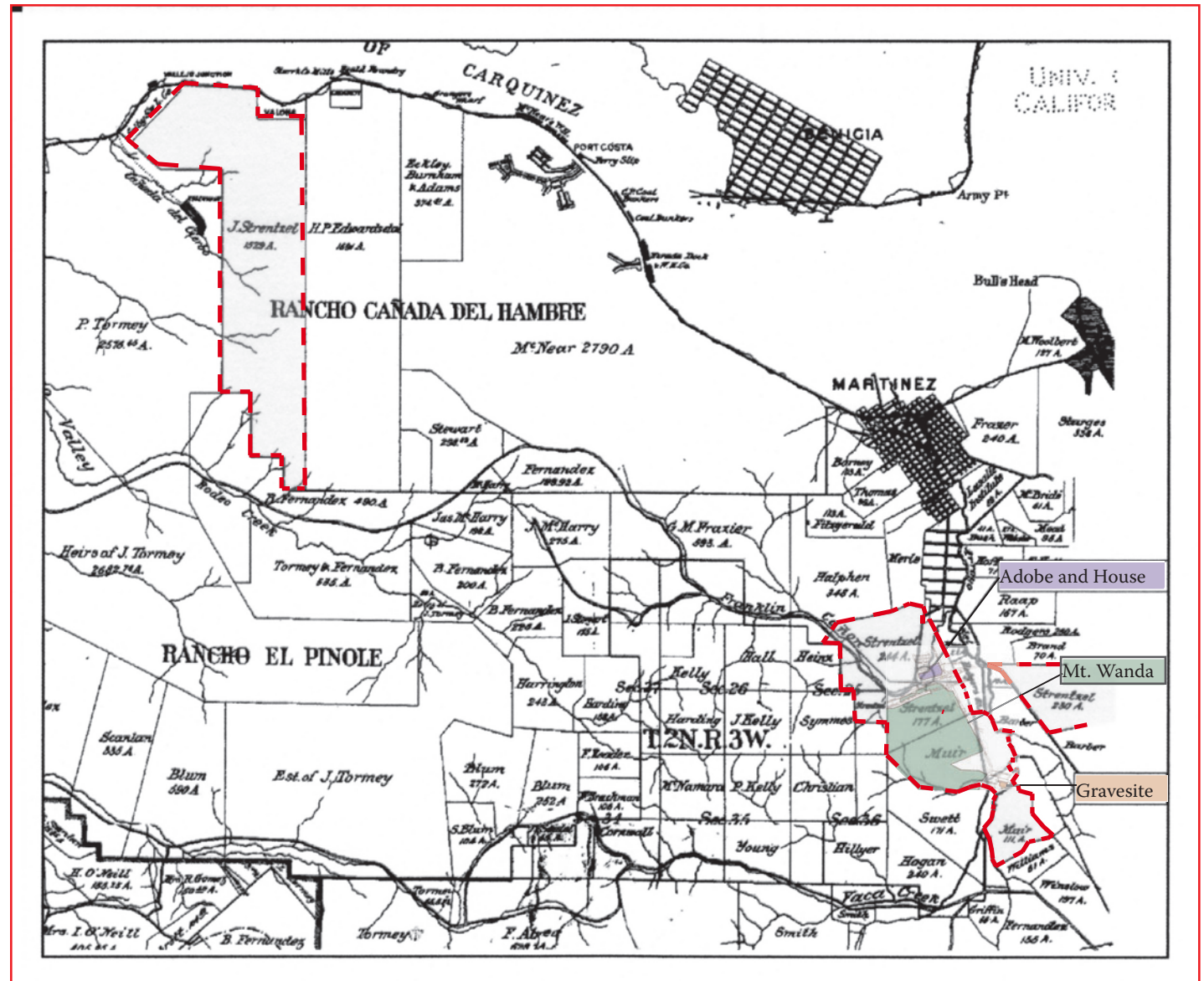


Figure 2.1: 1885 Atlas Showing Plot Ownerships Superimposed With Current John Muir NHS- Land Unit

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## **HISTORY**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAND AND LAND USE**

The Land that would later become the John Muir National Historic Site evolved from the home and hunting grounds of the Karkins, a Tribelet of the Ohlone Indians. The Carquinez straits was named by the Spanish Missionaries after the Karkin Indians. When the Spanish Missionaries arrived they introduced the practice of planned fruit growing and grazing. After Mexico gained its independence from Spain and claimed California as a Mexican state, the land was once again transformed. The Mexican government brought a different land philosophy than that of the missions. The Ranchos were larger and more widely spread, which made it easier to hold against an invading enemy. This led to large governmental land grants. The land use also changed with the majority of land devoted to grazing.

Don Ignacio Martinez, a favored military commander, was granted 17,700 acres in Contra Costa County which he named Rancho El Pinole. A portion of this land grant would later become the John Muir NHS. Following the acquisition of California by the U.S., Don Ignacio's son, Vincente Martinez, inherited a 1660- acre portion of the land called the Rancho Canada del Hambre "Valley of the Hungry" and built what is now known as the Martinez Adobe. During the years that followed, the land passed through a series of owners. The land was divided into smaller farms and its use was transformed from the grazing of animals to the cultivation of grain, fruit, and vine crops.

In April 1853, Dr John T Strentzel purchased a 20 acre parcel in the Canada del Hambre where he built his ranch house. Mrs. Strentzel not liking the name “Canada del Hambre”, decided to re-name it after the Moorish paradise “Alhambra” and the area has been known ever since as the Alhambra Valley. On July 30, 1853, Dr. Strenzel purchased a 12 acre tract which was planted with pears and would later become the Gravesite unit. In December, 1874, Dr. Strentzel purchased the 244-acre Redfern Farm which now includes the Strentzel-Muir House and Martinez Adobe. In 1885, Dr. Strentzel acquired land that would later include the Mt Wanda Unit. John Muir married Dr. John T Strentzel’s daughter, Louie, on April 14, 1880. A year later, following the birth of his first daughter Wanda and his return from Alaska, John Muir assumed the management of the ranch.

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## HISTORY

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SITE

The John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez , California (approximately 35 miles northeast of San Francisco) is comprised of three separate land units which were acquired by the National Park Service (NPS) at different times from 1964 to 2000 . Originally part of the 2600 acre Strentzel Ranch, today, the John Muir National Historic Site totals 340 acres.

In 1964, the NPS acquired the 8.9 acre House unit to preserve the 14-room Italianate Strentzel-Muir House and the Martinez Adobe. It is surrounded by fruit orchards and is also the location of the visitor center. The second unit acquired by the NPS was the Mt. Wanda unit. The 326 acres of oak woodland were acquired by the NPS in 1993. The third and final NPS site was acquired in 2000. This 1.3-acre parcel is known as the Gravesite Unit and is the focus of this project.

While The Gravesite unit was the last to be acquired by the NPS, it was one of the first land parcels purchased by Dr. Strentzel on July 30, 1853. This 12 acre parcel provided a northward expansion of the original 20 acres purchased in April of 1853. This fertile plot was where he planted his first pear orchard as well as Eucalyptus and Incense Cedars. Two years after the land purchase, in 1857, Dr Strentzel's only son, John Erwin died and was buried at this site next to Alhambra creek (i.e., Arroyo del Hambre). The Strentzel's daughter, Lottie who had died prior to the family's move to the Alhambra Valley was reinterred at this same spot thus establishing the family grave site. It is not known if any markers for the children were erected at this time. Dr. Strentzel's brother, Henry, was buried at the site in September, 1865. The family Gravesite was formally laid out in

1890 when Dr. Strentzel died on October 31. His wife, Louisiana Erwin Strentzel died in 1897 and was buried with her husband. Upon their deaths, John Muir (Dec. 24, 1914) and his wife, Louie Strentzel Muir (Aug. 6, 1905) were also buried in the family Gravesite.

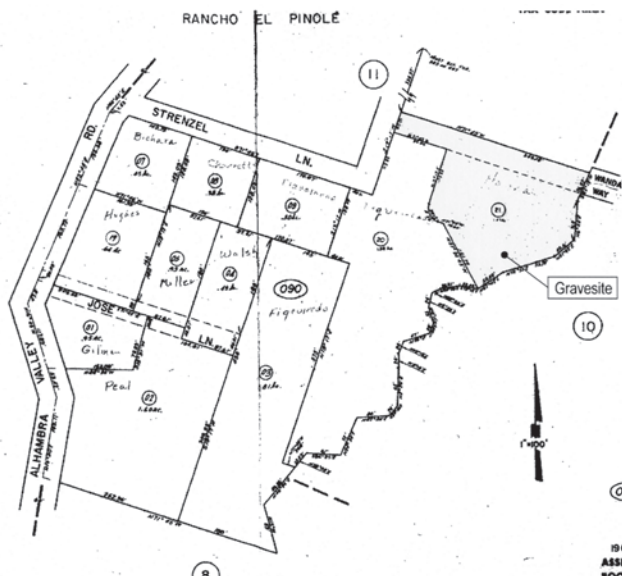


Figure 2.2 1962 Contra Costa County Assessor's Map Showing Gravesite Land Unit.



Figure 2.3: View From Mt Wanda Looking North At Back Of Strentzel-Muir House.



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## RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

*“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it  
hitched to everything else in the Universe.”*

*John Muir, My First Summer in The Sierra, 1911*

When developing a plan for the rehabilitation of a National Historic Site which includes the design of an interpretive visitor program, there are many questions that must be researched and answered. Since the John Muir NHS is on the National Register of historic places, the restrictions and guidelines imposed by the Secretary of the Interior must be addressed.

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical significance is determined by the National Register of Historic Places. To be considered “Significant,” one or more of the following criteria must be met:

- A. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. It is associated with the lives of persons significant to our past; or
- C. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. It has yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The John Muir National Historic Site was added to the National Register of Historic Places between 1962 and 1988. The designation was based on criterion A, B, and C. The site fulfilled criterion A and B based on events of national significance in the areas of Conservation, Social/Humanitarian Concerns, Literature, and Science specifically linked to John Muir and his contributions to the conservation movement and the establishment of national parks and forest reserves. Criterion C was met through the regional significance of the sites architecture and agriculture.

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## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Gravesite unit was added in October 1988, when five grave markers and the granite enclosure were deemed to be historically significant under criteria B. The Gravesite unit is significant as the final resting place of John Muir, a person with noted historical contributions.

## PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance is the length of time in which the property was associated with historical events or persons which qualify it for the National Register Listing. The period of significance for the John Muir NHS is 1840-1914. These dates begin with the construction of the Martinez Adobe and end with the date of Muir's death.

Within the period of significance, there is a period of interpretation for the Gravesite unit. This period begins with the burial of Dr. Strentzel in 1890 and ends with the death of John Muir in 1914.

## INTEGRITY

Integrity, as it pertains to historical properties, is determined by whether or not a property retains its historical identity. The National Register of Historical Places identifies the following seven aspects of integrity: *location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association*. (Figure 3.1)

While there have been changes in the Gravesite unit, and the property as whole, it retains the essential physical characteristics and features that define why and when the property was significant.

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## THE SEVEN ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY	DEFINITION	EVIDENCE
Location	The place where the historic landscape was constructed.	The major features of the Gravesite unit have not changed.
Design	The form, plan, space, structure, and style of the historic landscape.	The design of the Gravesite orchard is intact but diminished because of missing trees.
Setting	The physical environment of the property.	The setting at the Gravesite is diminished since some of the adjacent houses can be seen.
Materials	The physical elements of the site including construction and landscape materials used during the historic period.	The pear trees at the Gravesite are historic but are in a state of disrepair. The grave markers remain in good condition.
Workmanship	The physical evidence of the craftsmanship of a particular period.	The workmanship of the grave markers and cemetery enclosure remains evident.
Feeling	The expression of the historic sense of the time period.	The grave markers still evoke the feeling of a small rural cemetery and the size and form of the pear trees are obvious remnants of an orchard. The original qualities, however, are diminished because of missing trees, the addition of boundary plantings and the presence of surrounding houses
Association	The direct link between the landscape and the historical person.	The major features of the Gravesite unit were present when John Muir lived and were owned by him during the period of historical significance.

Figure 3.1: Table of Integrity.

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Figure 3.2: John Muir, Petrified Forest, Arizona (1904-06)

## RESEARCHABLE QUESTIONS

What features or aspects of the site are considered historically significant?

What must be considered in creating a plan to rehabilitate and maintain the historic integrity of the site?

What would John Muir's wishes be for the site?

What are the historic Cemetery/Gravesite practices of the time period?

What criteria should be used to create an interpretive visitor program without disturbance of the site?

What is the best way to represent the spirit of the place?

What materials can be used considering the site's on the National Register of Historic Places?

What is the best way to make a connection between the three land units of the John Muir National Historic Site when a physical connection is limited due to existing roads and highways?

What accommodations should be considered when creating a plan that includes ADA accessibility?

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## SITE ANALYSIS

*“The wrongs done to trees, wrongs of every sort,  
are done in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief,  
for when the light comes,  
the heart of the people is always right.”*

*John Muir*

In 2005, a cultural landscape report for John Muir National Historic Site was completed by Jeffery Killion, Historical Landscape Architect, of the Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation. The purpose of this extensive research and evaluation project is explained in the introduction of the Report,

### *PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT*

*A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) serves the National Park Service (NPS) in both documenting the History and significance of the cultural landscapes and providing guidance for both day-to-day and long-term management and interpretation. To this end, this CLR for the John Muir National Historic Site (NHS) consists of a narration of landscape history, an inventory and analysis of existing conditions and landscape significance, and treatment recommendations and actions consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. (Killion and Davison, History,1)*

The CLR provided a solid foundation upon which this project was constructed.

The site analysis portion of the “Design Process” for this project examines the existing conditions of the physical site. The Gravesite Unit was visited on numerous occasions at which time information and data was collected through photographs, measurements and mapping. Time was spent experiencing the site and its surroundings. An analysis of the site data collected was used to produce a comprehensive set of site analysis documents including: contextual location maps, a current land use map, a circulation and behavioral map, and an inventory of site features.

Much of the inventory and site analysis data disclosed in the 2005 CLR is consistent with the information gathered for this project. A comparison was made between the current existing conditions and those existing conditions found in 2005.





Figure 4.1: Incense Cedar Located At  
John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit



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SATELLITE IMAGE

Figure 4.2: Google Satellite Image

### LOCATION MAP

The Three John Muir National Historic Site Land Units

-  Mt. Wanda Unit
-  Strentzel/Muir House Unit
-  Gravesite Unit

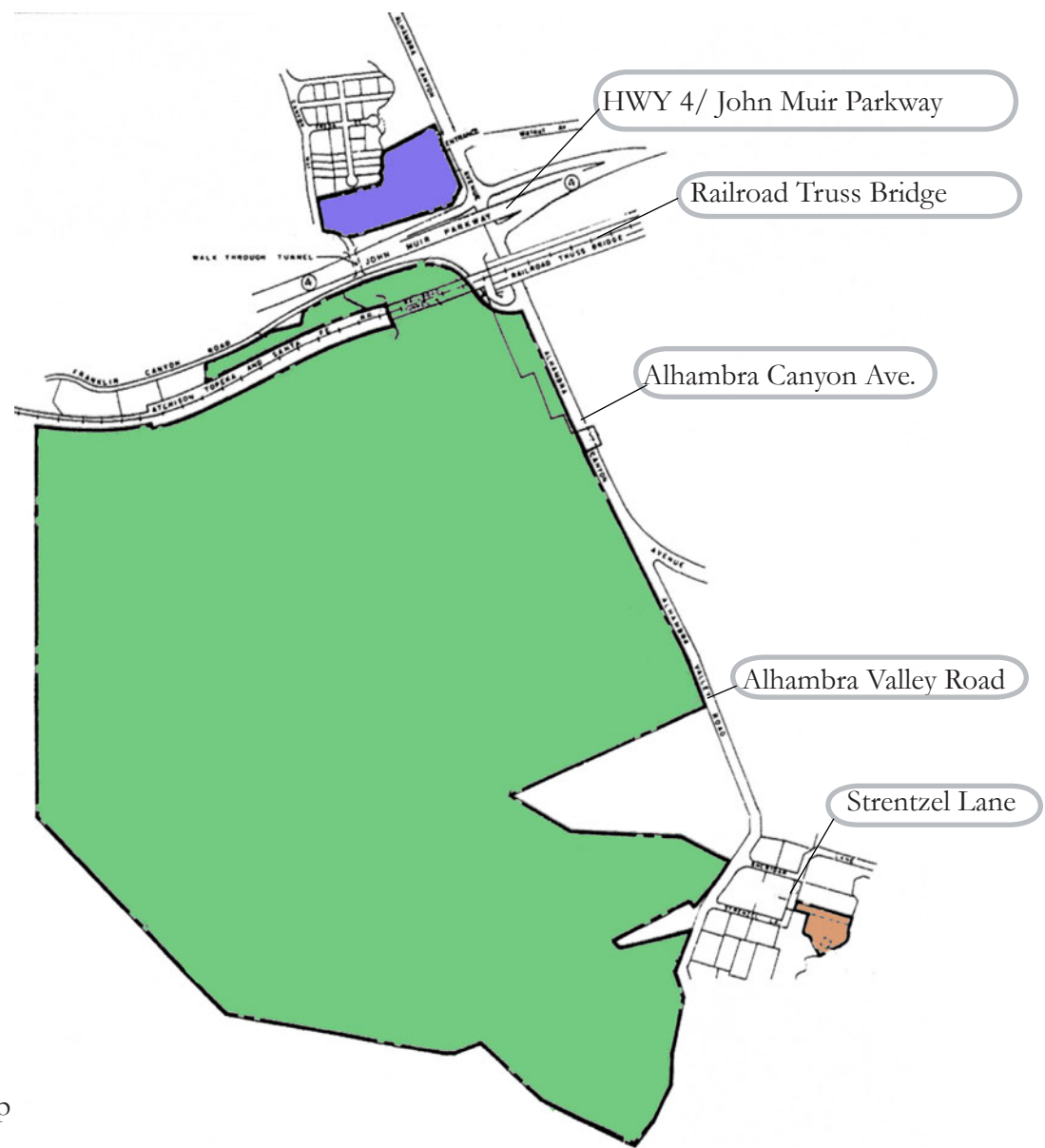


Figure 4.3: Area Location Map



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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Ground Surface, Paving and Circulation

#### **Parking/Entrance:**

- Gravel pavement on Strentzel Lane and at entrance to the site
- Parking space area for NPS vehicle in narrow.
- Service Lane: recently disturbed area has been re-planted with native grass seed.

#### **Orchard:**

- Grass - maintained by mowing.
- Remnant pear orchard maintained as functional Orchard.
- No circulation path through orchard present.

#### **Grave Enclosure:**

- No vegetation inside or directly outside of grave enclosure.
- No circulation path to gravesite enclosure.
- Gates around enclosure opens for maintenance.



Figure 4.4: John Muir NHS, Panaramic View Of Historic Pear Orchard Looking Southeast.





Figure 4.5: John Muir NHS, East View Of Gravesite Enclosure.



Figure 4.6: John Muir NHS, View Of Historic Pear Tree.

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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### The Structures

#### **Buildings:**

- No buildings exist within the Gravesite unit property boundary.
- House structures on the neighboring properties can be viewed from the Gravesite unit.

#### **Other Structures:**

- The Gravesite enclosure, constructed of Raymond granite, is a low rectangular shaped cope which surrounds the markers. It is 26' by 34' and it 1' high by 1' wide, set on a concrete foundation. At the west side of the enclosure (designated the front of the gravesite -since all markers face this side) there is a 4' wide granite step entry with two 18' high pillar inscribed with the date 1890.
- There are eight granite grave markers within the family plot.
  1. Strentzel family monument granite obelisk inscribed with the names of : John T. Strentzel, Louisiana E. Strentzel, John Erwin and dates of birth and death for Dr. and Mrs. Strentzel.
  2. John Muir
  3. Louie Strentzel Muir
  4. Wanda Muir Hanna
  5. Tom Hanna
  6. "Jonnie" (John Erwin Strenzel) died 1857
  7. "Lottie" (Lottie Strentzel) date of death unknown
  8. "Uncle Henry" (Dr. Strentzel's brother) died 1865

#### **Fences/Gates:**

- A wrought iron fence surrounds the Gravesite and is set 1' outside the granite enclosure (Fig.4.7).
- A double-wide gate is located at the west side (front) of the grave enclosure to allow for maintenance of the graves and markers.
- At the entrance to the Gravesite unit property there are 3 short metal posts set opposite each other, on either side of the entrance (just off Strentzel Lane). A heavy chain is attached to each post creating a barrier (to restrict vehicles). There is a "no parking-fire lane" sign hanging from the chain.





Figure 4.7: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Showing Granite Enclosure And Existing Iron Fencing

Figure 4.8: John Muir NHS, View Of Gravel Parking Area Leading to Historic Pear Orchard.





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Figure 4.9: John Muir NHS, Strentzel Family Monument.





Figure 4.10: John Muir NHS, The Grave Makers of John Muir and wife Louie.

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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### The Vegetation

#### **Orchard:**

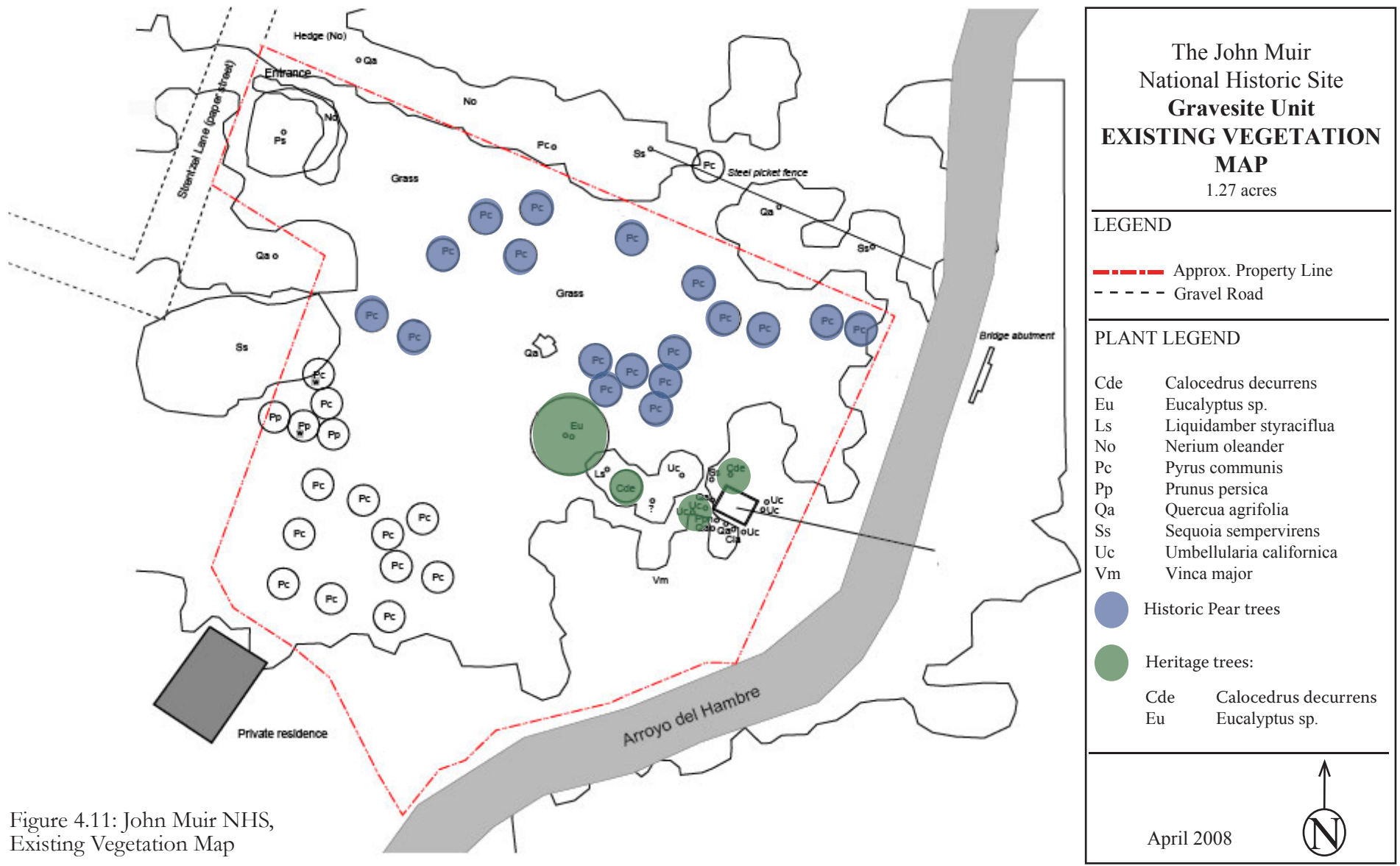
- *Pyrus communis* - Pear tree: 18 historic Pear trees located to the North of the gravesite enclosure. Within the property boundary. 12 non-historic Pear trees and 3 *Prunus persica* -Peach trees are planted in the Southeastern portion of the property.

#### **Heritage Trees/Historic Trees (Significant):**

- *Eucalyptus* sp. - A very large (specimen) tree is located in the center of the property.
- *Calocedrus decurrens* - Incense Cedar: a very old and large tree located between the *Eucalyptus* and the grave enclosure. and a smaller one located to the North of the graves.

#### **Riparian and Other Vegetation (trees, shrubs and vines):**

- California buckeye and sycamores (riparian)
- *Quercus agrifolia* and *lobata*
- *Umbellularia californica*
- *Vinca major*- located on south to south east side of the property.
- *Rosa californica* (possibly)
- Various other trees.



The John Muir  
National Historic Site  
Gravesite Unit  
**EXISTING VEGETATION  
MAP**  
1.27 acres

**LEGEND**  
 - - - - - Approx. Property Line  
 - - - - - Gravel Road

**PLANT LEGEND**

Cde	Calocedrus decurrens
Eu	Eucalyptus sp.
Ls	Liquidamber styraciflua
No	Nerium oleander
Pc	Pyrus communis
Pp	Prunus persica
Qa	Quercua agrifolia
Ss	Sequoia sempervirens
Uc	Umbellularia californica
Vm	Vinca major

● Historic Pear trees  
 ● Heritage trees:  
 Cde Calocedrus decurrens  
 Eu Eucalyptus sp.

April 2008

Figure 4.11: John Muir NHS,  
Existing Vegetation Map



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Figure 4.12: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, S.E.  
view of Remnant Pear Orchard



Figure 4.13: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, Historic Incense Cedar.





Figure 4.14: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, Historic Eucalyptus, Close-up



Figure 4.15: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, Historic Eucalyptus

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## OPPORTUNITIES AND...

- Vehicular Circulation is limited to West edge of site boundary.
- Site is secluded and retains sense of historic ranch
- Views of surroundings add to the rural/farm feeling (with the exception of a few neighboring houses).

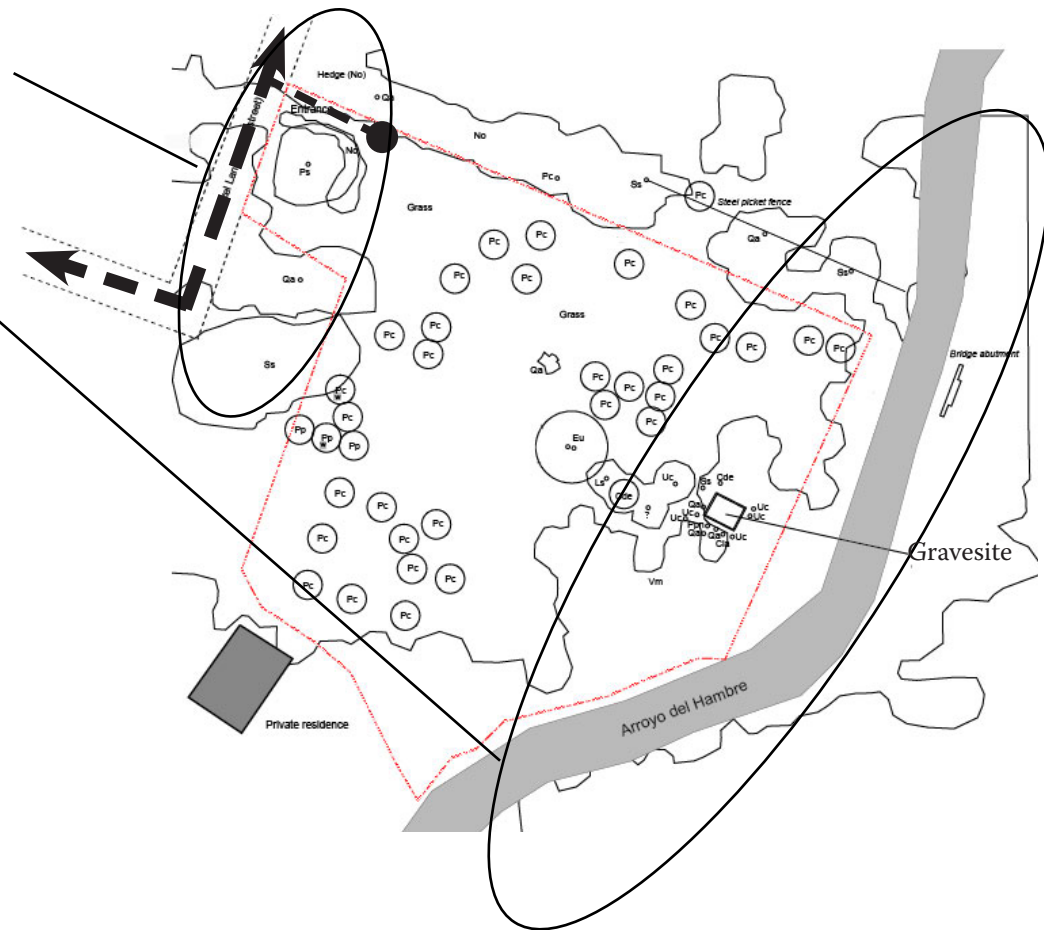


Figure 4.16: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, Opportunities Map

...CONSTRAINTS

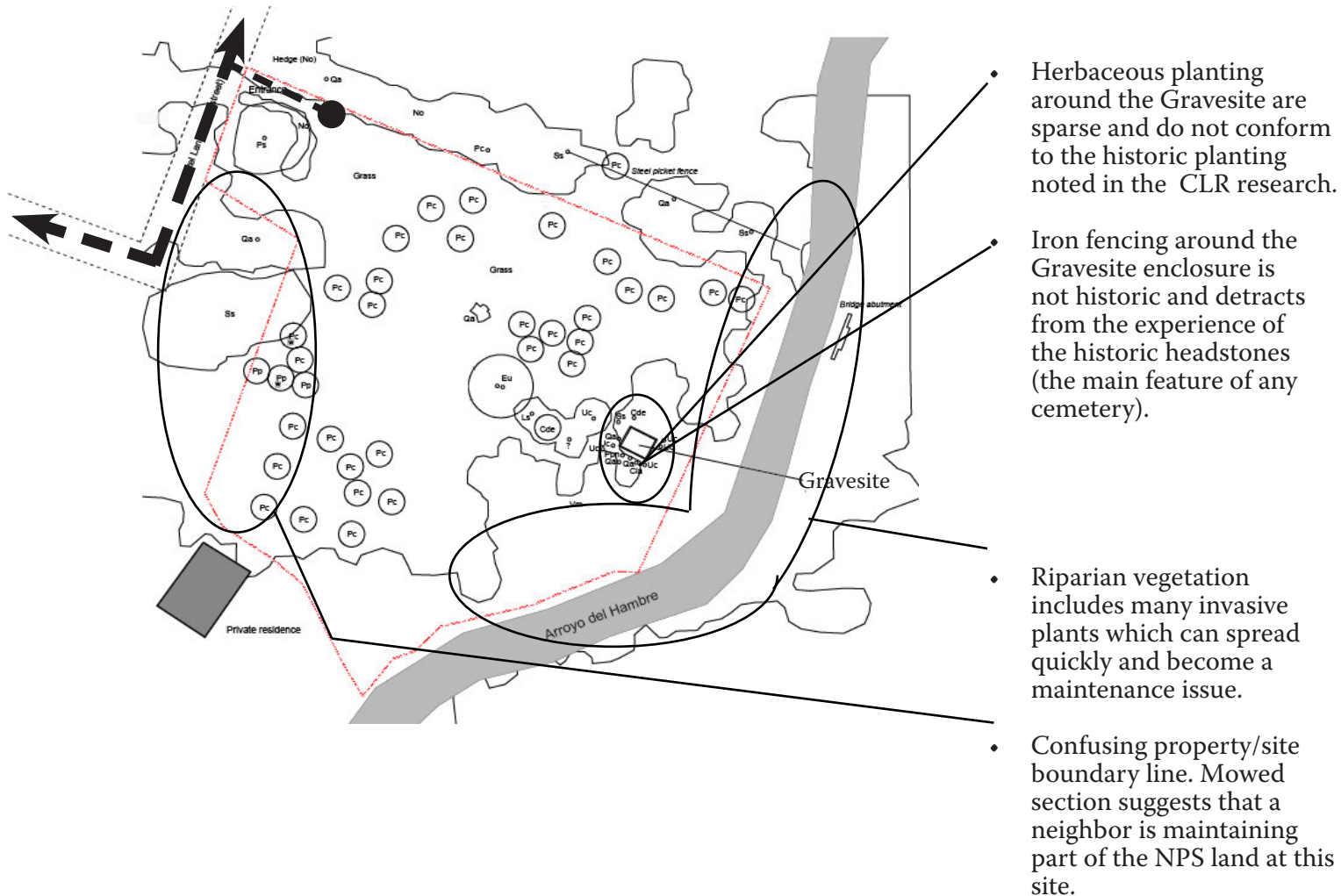


Figure 4.17: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, Constraints Map



# Reflections of a Man

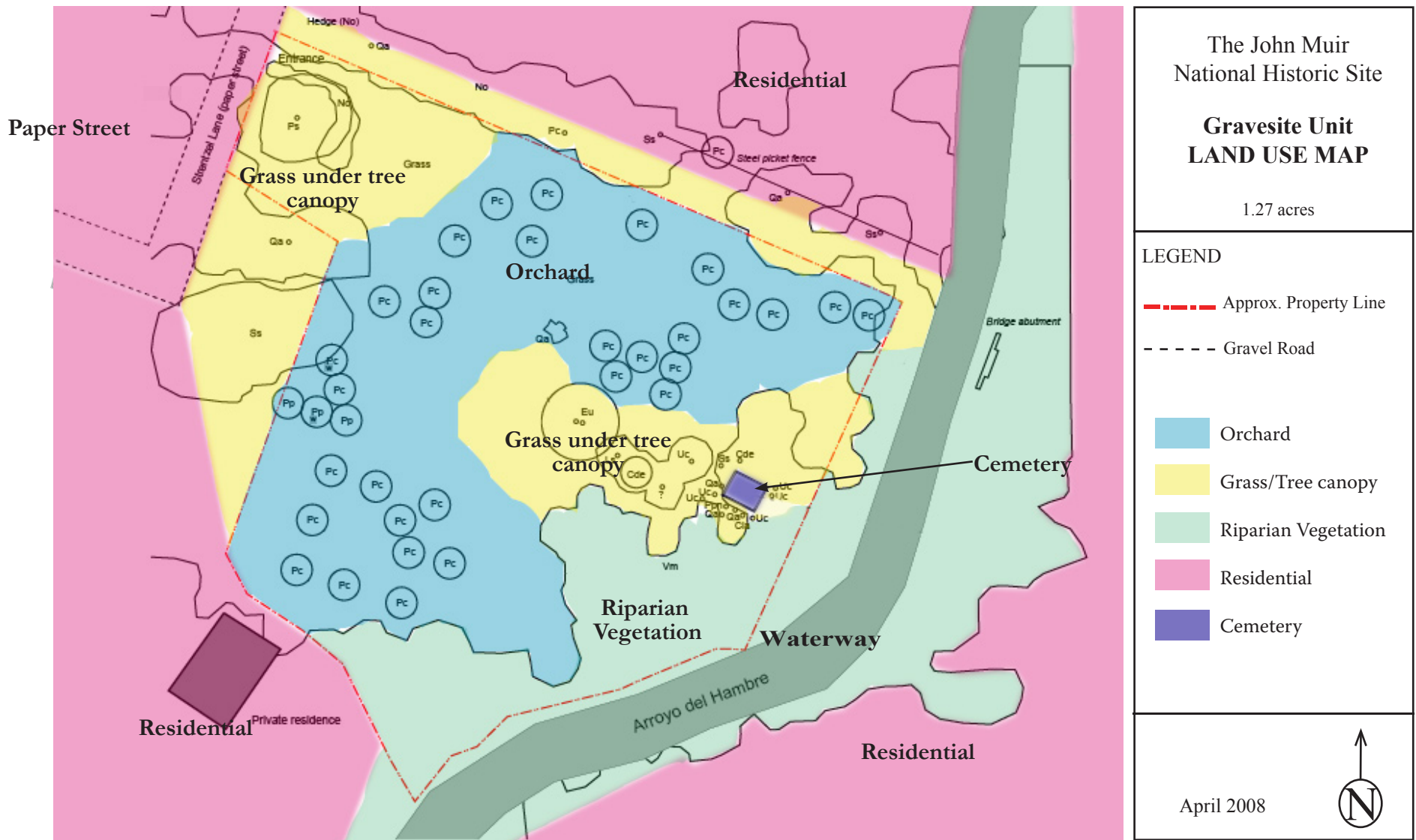


Figure 4.18: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, Land Use Map



Figure 4.19: John Muir NHS, Gravesite, View of Pear Orchard looking West from the bank of the Arroyo del Hambre



# Reflections of a Man

## HISTORICAL INTEGRITY ISSUES



Figure 4.20: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, South view of Pear Orchard, Showing Diminished Grid Pattern

Figure 4.21: John Muir NHS, Gravesite Unit, view Fencing from Inside Gravesite Enclosure



Several features or elements previously mentioned in the Existing Conditions section raise the issue of historical integrity and significance. After examining the existing conditions of the Gravesite unit property, the data collected was compared to the record of historically significant elements and conditions established by the CLR. Following are the areas and elements which may be areas or elements of concern to maintaining historic integrity.

### Orchard:

- While the historic Pears are still present in the orchard, the orchard grid pattern is diminished due to missing trees.
- The design and visitor program must not disturb the orchard; therefore, a path should not be constructed through the orchard.
- Maintenance of existing historic Pear trees is also very important.

### Fencing:

- The Iron fencing around the Gravesite enclosure was not installed nor was it present during the time of significance.
- Consideration should be made to removing that fencing and returning the Gravesite enclosure area back to its original state.
- For security purposes a fence that will serve as a physical barrier could be installed along the NPS Gravesite unit property boundary (with the exception of the property line which follows the Arroyo de Hambre.)

### Vegetation:

- The historic plantings discussed in the CLR may contribute to the significance of the site. The Eucalyptus and Incense Cedars were planted by Dr. Strentzel. The Large Eucalyptus planted by Dr. Strentzel prior to 1890 is now one of the largest of its kind, and according to the CLR, “Not only does it [Eucalyptus] convey the passage of time and add to the historic character, it serves as an appropriate marker for John Muir’s final resting place.”
- Rosa laevigata- (Cherokee Rose) which was said to be planted by Muir along the banks of the creek and around the grave site was recently thought to have been discovered at the site by park personnel, but once the buds opened the flowers were pink not white. dispelling for now the existence of the rose in the area.

## PUBLIC ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS



Figure 4.22: John Muir NHS, Entrance to Gravesite Unit, from Strentzel Lane.

Historically, the Gravesite land unit portion of the John Muir NHS was part of a larger orchard and did not contain any permanent trails or pathways. In considering a parking area and pathway to provide visitor access to the gravesite, the issue of equal accessibility for all the public is brought to the table. Following are the areas of concern and the possible solutions.

### Pathway Paving:

- Decomposed granite pathway installed at a minimum width of 5' constructed from compacted soil and a special decomposed granite base that easily accommodates most wheelchairs. A single layer of landscaping timbers border the trail along its entire length, except where, for safety, six inches of timber guard rail provides additional security.
- Routine or periodic maintenance or repair of pathways/trails or trail segments would include, but is not limited to: removal of debris and vegetation such as downed trees or broken branches in the trailway, clearing a trail of encroaching brush or grasses, maintenance of the trail tread such as filling ruts and entrenchments, reshaping trail beds, repairing trail surfaces and washouts; erosion control and drainage, realigning sections of trail to deter erosion or avoid boggy or marshy areas; and repair of trail or trailhead structures, including replacing deteriorated, damaged, or vandalized parts of structures such as information kiosks (bolders), fencing

### Parking:

- The same consideration should be given to the installation of the visitor parking area.
- The use of decomposed granite for a single ADA accessible parking space should be added to the existing parking area. This will make the transition from the parking space to the entrance and pathway accessible to all visitors.
- The same routine and periodic maintenance program as described for the pathways should be considered for the parking area.



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## CONCEPTUAL DESIGN AND INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM

*I never saw a discontented tree. They grip the ground as though they liked it, and though fast rooted they travel about as far as we do.”*

*John Muir*

The design for the Gravesite unit of the John Muir National Historic Site includes two essential aspects; the physical design plan and the interpretive program.

The physical design plan will provide for the rehabilitation of the Gravesite land unit with the purpose of maintaining its historical integrity. The plan will allow for the accommodation of visitors to this portion of the John Muir NHS. The design will create a point of entry to the site and provide a path upon which the ranger escorted tours may travel into the site. Traveling the designated path will facilitate in maintaining the historic integrity of and reduce the impact to the site resources. The physical design will also address the security and maintenance needs of a National Park Service site, insuring its preservation as a public treasure.

The interpretive visitor program will be enhanced by the physical design and will serve as a program in which visitors will experience and learn about the site, its history, resources, and its connection to John Muir. The program will convey the meaning of the site to the visitor. . The visitor program will be an addition to the established and currently used visitor programs for the House and Mt. Wanda units. Since the development and expansion of the city of Martinez has physically divided the site land units, the interpretive program will serve as a connection between the land units and convey the historic unity of the original ranch site.

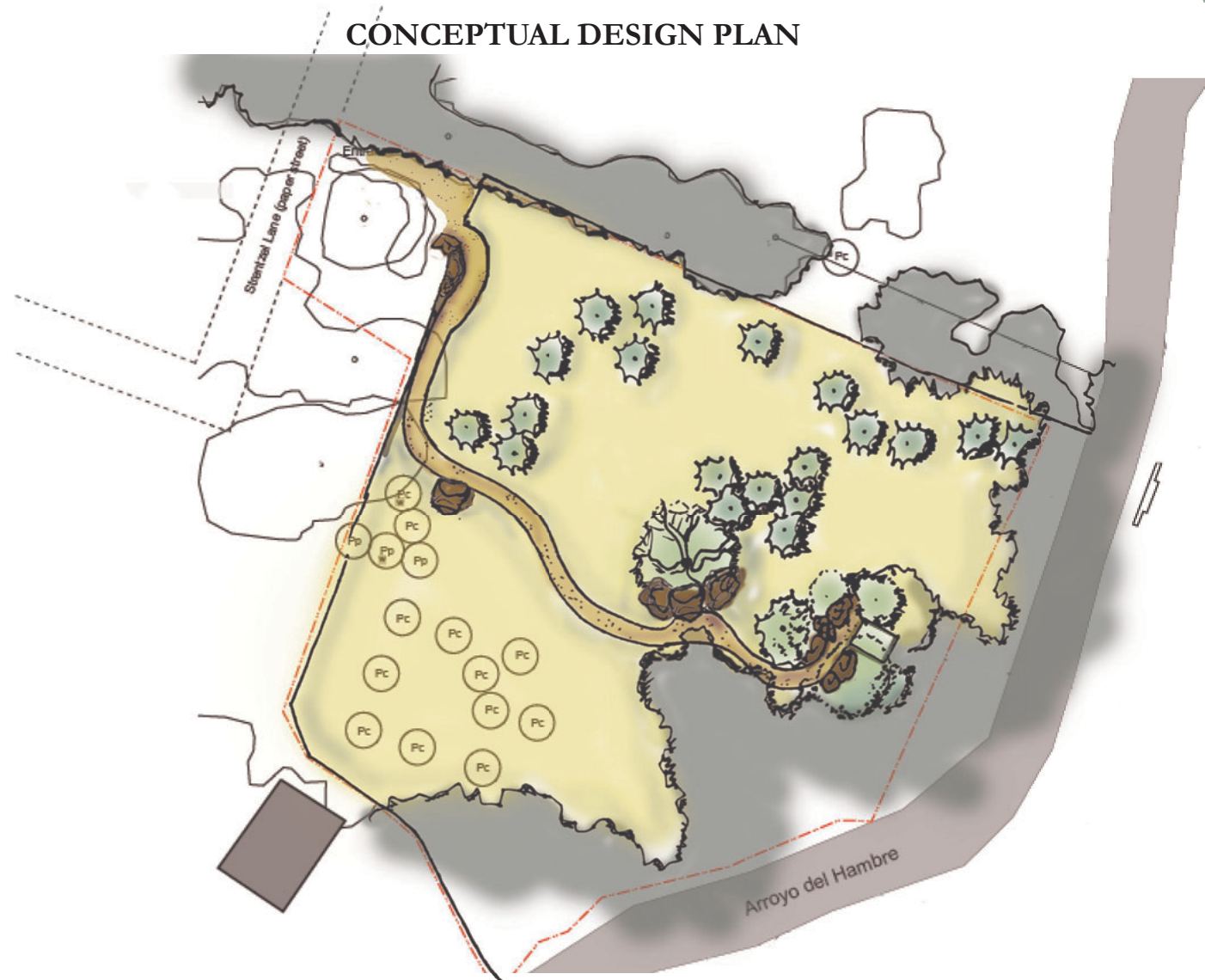


Figure 5.1: Conceptual Design Plan for the Gravesite Unit of John Muir NHS.

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## PROPOSED DESIGN AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The design for the Gravesite will provide ranger guided access to the public, and an interpretive educational program that will convey the meaning of the site to the visitor. At the same time the design will provide for the rehabilitation of the site with the purpose of maintaining the historical integrity. The design will include the following elements:

- **Entry-** A point of entry will be established at the north-west corner near the parking area. This entry will designate the beginning of the trail, leading the visitor through the grave site area marked by the entrance signage in the form of a boulder
- **Signage and Seating-** Large landscape boulders will be installed and used as informational signage and seating throughout the area. The boulders will be engraved with quotes and information and will be strategically placed to facilitate the interpretive program.
- **Pathway/Trail-** A decomposed granite pathway will be installed at a minimum width of 5'. The pathway will begin at the entry point and will run South along the fence line of the property, turning East after the Eucalyptus and continue to the grave site.
- **Vegetation-** The existing “Historic Pears” and “Heritage Trees” at the site will serve as focal points along the path and will be elements in the interpretive program.
- **Fencing-** A fencing system will be installed to delineate the property boundaries as well as to create a physical barrier for the purpose of securing the property. The existing fencing around the grave site enclosure will be removed.

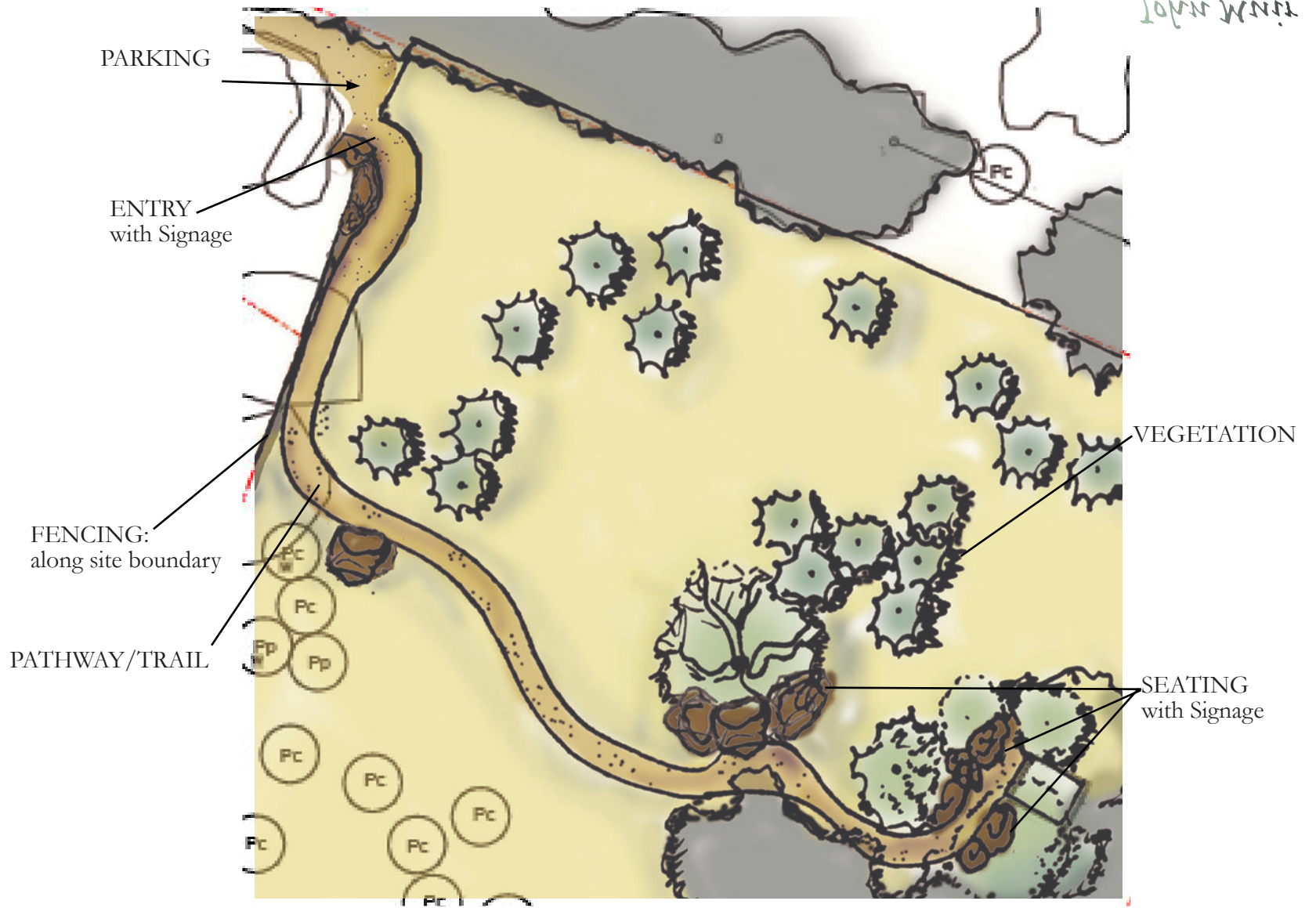


Figure 5.2: Proposed Design Elements for the Gravesite Unit of John Muir NHS.

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Figure 5.3: John Muir, 1908

## ENTRY

- The entrance to the Gravesite begins at the edge of the parking area.
- The sense of arrival is achieved by the addition a large monolithic boulder with an engraved quote and historic site marker.
- A single gate will secure the pedestrian entrance.
- The entrance to the path will be ADA accessible with a minimum width of 5 feet.
- A double gate for service vehicle access will be located to the north of the pedestrian entrance.





Figure 5.4: Arch Entry  
Yosemite National Park



Figure 5.5: An Example of  
an Entry stone.



Figure 5.6: Arches National  
Monument

# Reflections of a Man

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Figure 5.7: John Muir, Yosemite National Park

## SEATING AND SIGNAGE

A large engraved boulder will mark the entrance to the site. Along the pathway several boulders will provide inspirational quotes, information, and seating.

- Large Sierra granite boulders with a flat surface will be used for seating.
- Some of the boulders at important focal points along the pathway will be engraved and serve the purpose of an informational kiosk.
- Some of the boulders will be seating only, others will be informational only and some will serve a dual purpose.



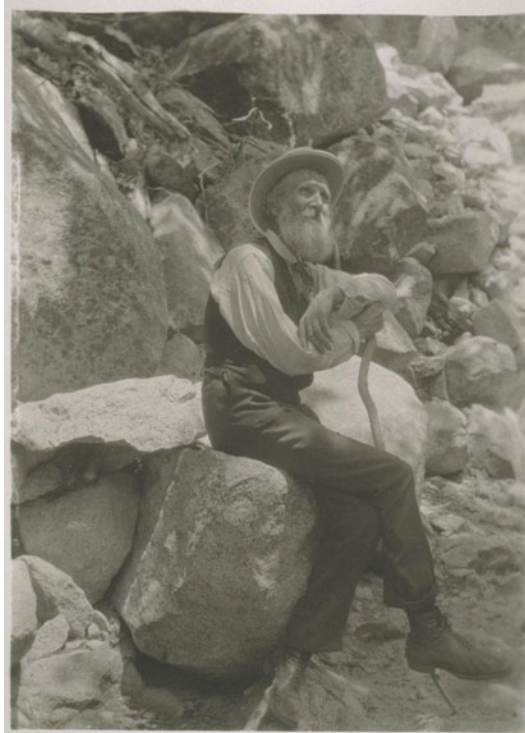


Figure 5.8: John Muir, 1907,  
Yosemite National Park



Figure 5.9: John Burroughs and John Muir taken in Yosemite, 1908



Figure 5.10: Katikati haiku  
path, New Zealand

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Figure 5.11: John Muir at home, Martinez, CA, (Jomu)

## FENCING

A wire fencing system will be installed to delineate the property boundaries as well as to create a physical barrier for the purpose of securing the property. Suggestions for fencing systems are:

- Omega II fencing systems of rigid welded wire panels, fabricated from three 4 GA - 6 GA wires. The material is galvanized then polyester powder coated. Available in several heights and finish colors. The Posts are 2"x2" and the mesh opening sizes vary according to style. This type of fencing system creates a physical barrier without creating a visual barrier.
- Both a single and a double gate of the same material will be installed to secure the site while still allowing access.





Figure 5.12:  
Wire fence  
example,  
UC Davis

Figure 5.14: Wire  
fence example,  
UC Davis  
campus



Figure 5.13:  
Wire fence,  
OmegaII





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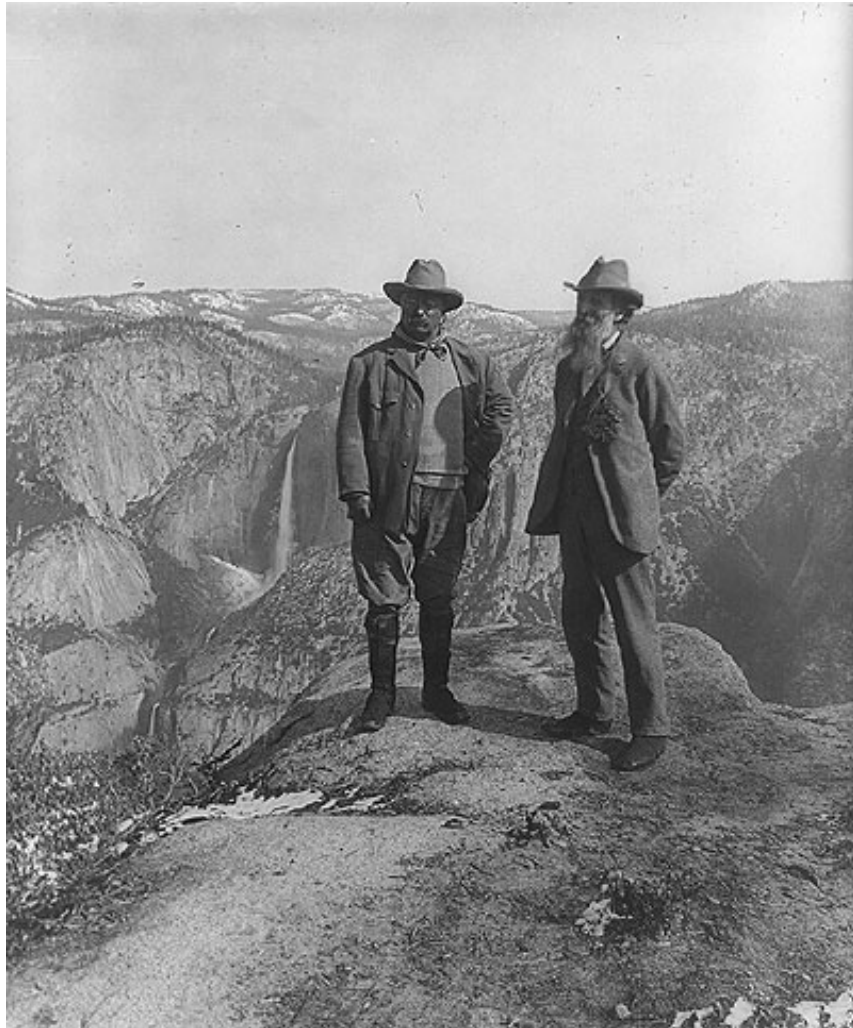


Figure 5.15: The End of the Trail Glacier Point, Yosemite National Park, John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt

## PATHWAY/TRAIL PAVING

Paving: to create a natural, unobtrusive pathway into/through the site, a material that has a natural look but that does not require extensive maintenance. In addition, the paving material used for both the parking surface and the pathway should be ADA appropriate material and should be considered

- Decomposed granite pathway installed at a minimum width of 5'. The pathway/ trail should follow along the boundary fence line so that disturbance to the orchard ground is minimal. Creating a path around the trees that leads the visitor to the Gravesite without cutting through the site and diminishing the tranquil feeling.
- Parking area paving should be decomposed granite or a permeable asphalt in at least one parking space to allow for handicap access.



Figure 5.16: Section of DG path



Figure 5.17: ADA accessible DG path



Figure 5.18: Decomposed Granite Path HAT -Handicapped Accessible Trail



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## VEGETATION

- The Historic Pear trees should be maintained and consideration should be given to adding new trees (propagated from the historic varieties) to reestablish the orchard grid of the period of significance, which has diminished the integrity of the orchard.
- The Heritage Trees, the Eucalyptus and Incense Cedar, should be maintained and will be considered integral elements of the interpretive tour and the overall experience of the site.
- Plant materials around Gravesite enclosure should be determined based on the maintenance plan for the site. Possible plantings could include the reintroduction of the Cherokee Rose and bulb planting around the Gravesite enclosure which were referenced in the CLR as Helen Muir remembrance of the Gravesite.
- Using plantings of native riparian vegetation to stabilize the bank of the Arroyo del Hambre would be advisable (refer to the treatment recommendations in the CLR.)
- Screening vegetation should be added where needed and maintained where existing.

Figure 5.19. "Muir looking at Pear Tree"





Figure 5.20: View, looking South, of the remnant historic Pear orchard, JMNHS, Gravesite.

Figure 5.21: View of the large Eucalyptus planted by Dr. Strentzel prior to 1890. Beginning 1959, The Sierra Club memorial walks included the linking of hands around this Eucalyptus tree and singing “Auld Lang Syne”



# Reflections of a Man

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## The Visitors Experience

### A Narrative

As the visitor travels from the John Muir National Historic Site Visitor's Center to the Gravesite area, the landscape transitions from city streets to small neighborhood lanes and then to a rural nook tucked between houses. The nook, hidden by large trees and shrubs, opens to a small unobtrusive area where the vehicle stops. The visitor disembarks and is allowed to take-in the panoramic view of an orchard. A large monolithic boulder stands as a sentinel greeting the guests with the words of John Muir. (Fig. 5.23). As they enter the path their journey of discovery begins. A few steps in, they may choose to sit, as John Muir would, on nature's bench, a sierra granite boulder. (Fig. 5.24) Here looking to the East, the visitor is transported back in time to the 1800s, when this pear orchard was alive with the activities of a productive fruit business. If only these trees could talk; what stories they would tell of Dr. Strentzel and John Muir, who planted and tended these historic trees.



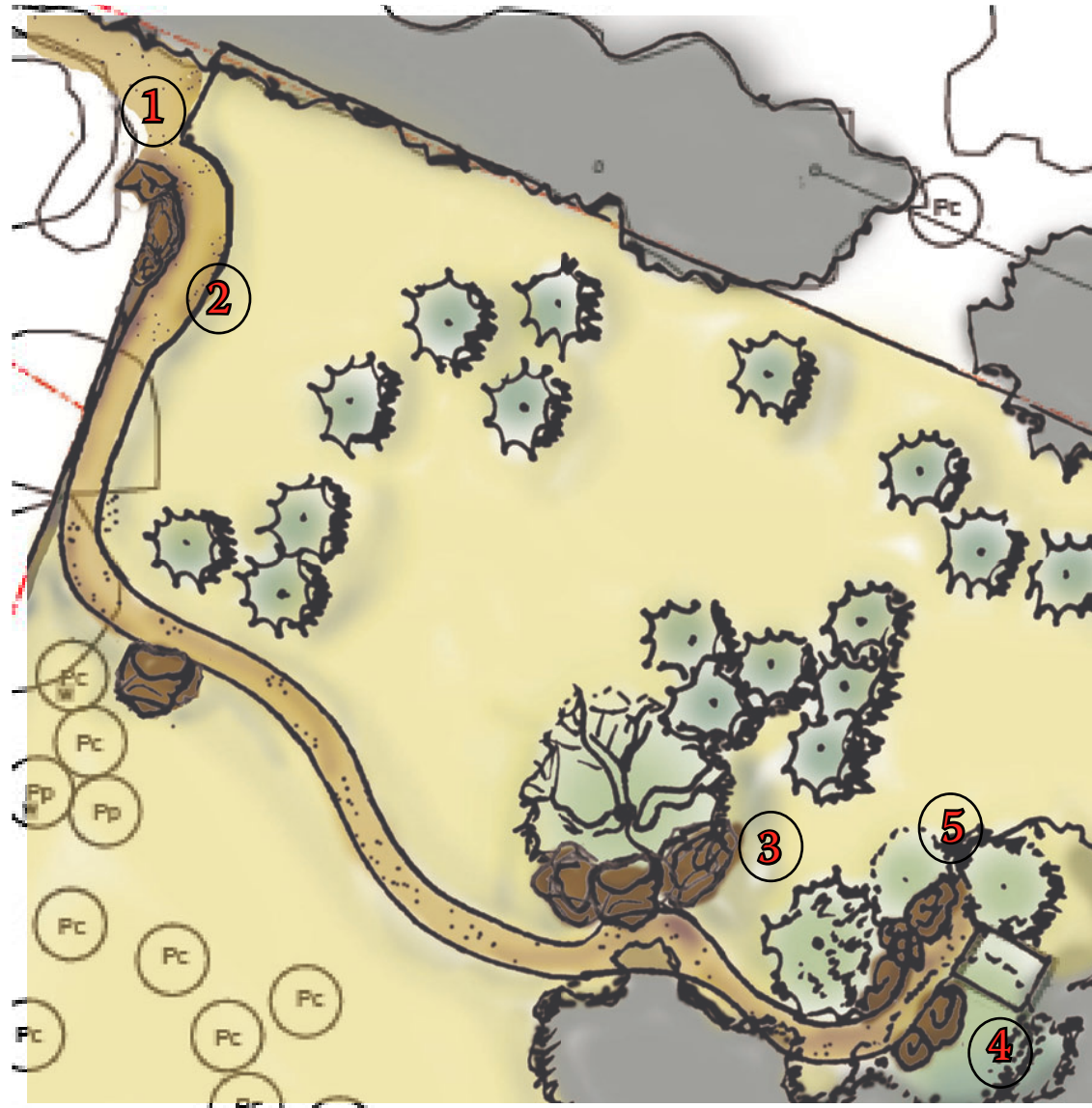


Figure 5.22: Visitor's Experience, Plan View Map of Point of Interest. , JMNHS, Gravesite

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1



Figure 5.23: Perspective drawing of entrance to Gravesite  
Inscribed on the entrance rock is John Muir's quote, *"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."*

2



Figure 5.24: Perspective drawing of Path *"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike."*

*John Muir, THE YOSEMITE, pg.198*



3

As the visitor continues down the path, the historic grid pattern of the orchard can still be seen. As the path turn East, a boulder offers another opportunity to stop and contemplate John Muir’s view of trees; *“Trees go wandering forth in all directions with every wind, going and coming like ourselves, traveling with us around the sun two million miles a day, and through space, heaven knows how fast and far!” -John Muir.* The path curves as it approaches the Eucalyptus. The tree’s enormous stature conveys its historic significance. When Dr. Strentzel was buried here in 1890, John Muir likened this tree to “A guardian angel watching over the graves.” According to local legend, John Muir’s burial service was held under the spreading branches of this massive Eucalyptus tree which Muir had long admired. (clr Vol Chapter3 p.129). The boulders located here, allow the visitor to rest under the same spreading branches as John Muir (Fig, 5.25).



Figure 5.25: Perspective of boulders near the great Eucalyptus tree, John Muir NHS, Gravesite. Engraved in the boulder seat; *“Like trees in autumn shedding their leaves, going to dust, I like beautiful days to night, proclaiming as with the tongues of angels the natural beauty of death.”*

*John Muir, Steep Trails.*



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4



The path then winds its way around the Incense cedar to the front of the gravesite. Within the gravesite enclosure, there are three small granite headstones with arched tops bearing the names “Jonnie” (John Erwin Strenzel- died 1857), “Lottie” (Lottie Strenzel- date of death unknown) and “Uncle Henry” (Dr. Strenzel’s brother- died 1865). The large granite obelisk is inscribed with the names of : John T. Strenzel, Louisiana E. Strenzel, John Erwin and dates of birth and death for Dr. and Mrs. Strenzel.

Figure 5.26: Perspective drawing of rock benches next to John Muir gravesite. Inscribed across the series of three large granite boulders.

*“On no subject are our ideas more warped and pitiable than on death...Let children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life, and that the grave has no victory, for it never fights. All is divine harmony”.*

*John Muir, A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf, Ch. 4 - Camping Among the Tombs (1916)*

5

John Muir and Louie Strentzel Muir lie side by side. The floral engraving on their headstones is thought to be a Scottish thistle. The grave of Wanda Muir Hanna and her husband, Tom Hanna, are marked by two granite headstones that lie on the ground next to each other (Fig.5.26) A series of boulders are strategically placed to allow for quiet and reverent reflection on the life and contributions of John Muir (Fig. 5.27).



Figure 5.27: Perspective drawing of John Muir Gravesite, showing a visitor sitting on a natural rock bench in quiet repose. The bench bears the inscription of John Muir's words, *"The mountains are calling and I must go."*

# Reflections of a Man

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## CONCLUSION

*I used to envy the father of our race, dwelling as he did in contact with the new-made fields and plants of Eden; but I do so no more, because I have discovered that I also live in 'creation's dawn.' The morning stars still sing together, and the world, not yet half made, becomes more beautiful every day."*

*John Muir, WILDERNESS WORLD OF JOHN MUIR, pg.311*

The design of the Gravesite project creates a continuity between the three land units of the John Muir National Historic Site. The recommended plantings re-establish and maintain the historical integrity. The fencing system ensures that resources are preserved and safe. ADA access was created without diminishing the integrity of the site. By allowing access to the site, while limiting the impact on the land and historical resources, the design stays true to John Muir's ideals. The plan restores the historic structures and plantings to their original design. Visitors to the gravesite will now be able to experience the site through an interpretive program .

I discovered through the time I have spent researching, studying and creating this project that the John Muir NHS is much more than meets the eye. It has the potential to inspire, educate, and transform. The site is historically significant because of its relationship to such an important man in the history and future of the world. If this project allows more people to experience first hand the life and contributions of John Muir I will consider it to be a success.





Figure 6.1: John Muir at Petrified Forest, Arizona circa 1904-06.

# Reflections of a Man

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# Reflections of a Man

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*I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till  
sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.*

*John Muir, JOHN OF THE MOUNTAINS: THE UNPUBLISHED JOURNALS OF JOHN MUIR*

# Reflections of a Man

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John Muir  
JOHN MUIR

