



The Sierra Club, dedicated to preserving and exploring the wilderness, was one of the results of its President John Muir's work. These picnicking ladies are early members.

Muir believed that it was in nature that one can best answer questions of life and its meaning. Disturbing the balance of nature, he said, leads to floods and drought. Disturbing the balance of peoples leads to war.

In California's rugged Sierra Nevada mountains he felt at home—although he rarely stayed in one place. He was always going off on hikes and adventures. He would "throw some tea and bread in an old sack and jump over the back fence." Muir climbed mountains, slogged through swamps, faced bears, panthers, and snakes. He never carried a gun, to kill was to disturb nature. He walked through much of Alaska, the Grand Canyon, and California's Yosemite Valley. Yosemite, carved by glaciers (as Muir discovered), has mountains, meadows, waterfalls, and cliffs. It has giant sequoia trees. "God himself seems to be doing his best here,"

was what John Muir said of Yosemite. His writings helped make it a national park. That was in 1890, the same year the census bureau reported there was no more frontier. (Do you think that was a coincidence?)

Three kinds of people were deciding the future of our national resources. There were those, like John Muir, who loved nature so intensely that they wanted to leave vast acres just as they were created, untouched by man. Others, who also cared about the land, thought land should be used, but wisely. They wanted foresters to harvest timber and plant new trees so there would be woods and forests for the future. But others seemed to care only about using land and lumber to make money. A congressman, in that last group, voted against a conservation bill. "Not one penny for scenery," he said. Many people agreed with him. John Muir was alarmed. America's timberland was rapidly disappearing. Using a scientist's eye and a poet's tongue, he began to convince Americans that trees and birds and animals were too precious to destroy.

*Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigation... but as fountains of life.*

Muir also said:

*It took more than three thousand years to make some of the trees... trees that are still... waving and singing in the mighty forests of the Sierra... Any fool can destroy trees... They cannot run away.*

John Muir believed that all the world is interrelated. "When we try to pick out anything by itself," he wrote, "we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

