John Muir and his Conservation Legacy

Chelsea Komenda

Nebraska Wesleyan University
Muir was a man that made a lot of differences in people’s lives and a man a lot of people will never forget. His legacy is left behind today and his messages still resonate. There are a lot of different things people can remember him by. His work and drive ethic was something to be noticed. His passion for nature and natural beauty was undoubtedly amazing and a lot of people respected him because of that.

Muir left behind a bunch of books and articles that he published that told his story of his adventures and true love of nature. “California and Alaska, will be here a long time after we are all gone; but your books must be got ready for the long life that awaits them, for they must live as long as the country remains safe from the final clash of things (Worster, 2009 pg. 458). A New York publisher and editor Walter Hines Page wrote that about more and that sums up the fact that a lot of people wanted and needed to hear about his stories and his adventures. Muir will be greatly remembered and his conservation legacy will live on because of the fact that he wrote books and published material about his entire life. People wanted to hear about it and know what want on. There are five book-length classic for nature lovers, The Mountains of California (1894), Our National Parks of My Boyhood and Youth (1901), My First Summer in the Sierra (1911), The Yosemite (1912), and The Story of My Boyhood and Youth (1913) (Worster, 2009 pg. 462). The fact that he wrote all of these books and they are still popular today shows the kind of writing ability he had and just how interesting his stories actually were. According to the Times “Although he was not a maker of many books, John Muir achieved for himself an enviable place in our prose literature, simplicity and elegance are admirably mingled in his descriptions of the scenery he loved” (Worster, 2009 pg. 462). The fact that so many people went out of their way to talk about Muir and the work he did is unbelievable. Even
though he was not a maker of many books the ones he did publish were amazing and have gotten a lot of attention.

Muir’s legacy is remembered in other ways as well. According to Worster (2009 pg. 464) remembered not his accumulated wealth that he had but they remembered his love for the outdoors. In honor of the love they had for him they made him the most famous and ubiquitous name in their states history. The name Muir began to appear on buildings, signs, and natural features all over the place. It was in schools to real-estate companies in parklands. In the year of 1915 the state legislature appropriated an initial $10,000 to construct the John Muir Trail through one of the most spectacular mountain vistas in the nation (Worster, 2009 pg. 464). The fact that he has so many things named after him and people continue to read his books even to this day goes to show the kind of person he was and the fact that he valued so much what he did. His passion for nature is amazing and it goes to show with all of the trails and different things that are named after him.

“Nature loves man, beetles, and birds with the same love” (Worster, 2009 pg. 466). That was Muir’s philosophy and something he really lived by. He loved nature and nothing in his mind compared to it. He wanted to make the parks and nature settings better. He led many times some conservation movements that people will not forget. He proposed some parks with Robert Underwood Johnson and tried to get many famous figures on his side with different things. The Hetch Hetchy project and his love for Yosemite will never go unnoticed. Yosemite is a wonderful thing and we are apt to see it as a wonderful creation; as in the only valley of its kind in the world, but nature is really poor as to only have one of anything (Muir, 810). The Hetch Hetchy project was one of his main ideas. He did not want it to be destroyed and wanted the natural beauty to always stay in magnificent places. His conservation movements began to
attract many women as well as other men too, some male conservationists actually began to kind of feel anxious about their place in society as whole (Worster, 2009 pg. 433). He also had a huge love of forests. He states that the forests of America, however they are slighted by that of man, must have been a great delight to God, because they were the best he ever planted (Muir, pg. 701). He had such a love for them and for him looked like a garden and the natural beauty was unbeatable. He loved explaining all of the trees and vegetation in the forests.

He worked with President Roosevelt with his conservation movement and Roosevelt really helped Muir with this. A quote by Roosevelt, “The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our National life. Unless we maintain an adequate material basis for our civilization, we can not maintain the institutions in which we take so great and so just a pride; and to waste and destroy our natural resources means to undermine these material bases” (Worster, 2009 pg. 430). I think this quote sums up the type of movement Muir was trying to lead and make his mark on things.

He was a man that truly didn’t want anything better more than leaving his legacy with Nature. He wanted our natural resources to be used the right way and to really lead people to see the beauty of the nature around us. In his mind nothing was more beautiful than the natural world and it not getting destroyed by humans or anything else. If there is one thing Muir I believe taught a lot of people is if you really have a passion for something and love something just as he loved nature, you have to go out and make your mark and not worry about what other people at the time think of you and the type of passion you have. He will forever remain one of the most talked about nature lovers and someone who helped with the conservation movement
and his legacy will remain on because of his dedicated passion to nature and that of writing to tell his stories.
Works Cited


Rather it was John Muir, that storied wanderer and founder of the Sierra Club, whose name was synonymous with this national treasure. When my brothers and I climbed out of the family station wagon to witness the majesty of this glacier-carved valley, it was Muir’s name that adorned the signs along the manicured trails and the celebrated volumes in the gift shop. The conservation decisions of the nineteenth century have left a legacy that is still felt today. For Muir and his nineteenth century contemporaries, conservation meant “government protection should be thrown around every wild grove and forest on the mountains.” This approach continues to be the standard model for conservation around the world.