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The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography by Steven J. Holmes

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had his biases, but his recollection of dates and facts almost always proved accurate when checked against primary sources. There is no doubt this is Albright's work. The language and style are his.

Anyone interested in the history of the National Park Service will enjoy this book. It is a useful new source of information about the earliest years of this important federal agency.

Reviewed by Donald C. Swain, author of Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation (University of Chicago Press, 1970) and Federal Conservation Policy 1921–1933 (University of California Press, 1963). Mr. Swain was professor of history at the University of California, Davis and the University of Louisville, and served as president of the University of Louisville from 1981–1995.

The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography. By Steven J. Holmes. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. xv + 309 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth \$55.00, paper \$22.95.

A new work entitled, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography*, by Steven J. Holmes joins the flood of books and articles issued over the last two decades on John Muir. Indeed, we are now into the third generation of biographies of Muir, the first appearing in 1916 two years after his death by William F. Badè (William F. Badè, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, 2 v., Houghton Mifflin, 1923). The second work to assume a major place in the literature, authored by Linnie Marsh Wolfe (*The Son of the Wilderness*, University of Wisconsin Press), was not published until 1945, but now important studies appear every few years. While the early work tended to be narrative in approach, the recent biographies have been deeply analytical, drawing often on several disciplines to create multifaceted examinations of Muir. This new work by Holmes fits into that genre, as it builds on literature, history, psychology, and other fields in seeking to develop as full a portrait as possible of its complex subject.

The title of the first chapter, "Reimagining Muir, Remapping Biography," suggests the author's approach. He focuses on what he terms the three core images of Muir: the wild child, the ecstatic convert in Yosemite, and the discoverer of Nature as his true home. Arguing that these images have been little analyzed but, rather, simply adopted by authors from Muir's own pen, which in fact were often embedded in retrospective writings of his experiences although presented otherwise, Holmes offers a useful revisionist if somewhat repetitious and occasionally strained discussion. In the course of developing his analysis, Holmes provides the reader with a biography which traces the dynamics of Muir's relationships to various environments, while the author attempts what he calls a reconstruction of Muir's life from the ground up. In doing so, he adopts a recent psychoanalytical theory, the object relations approach, which emphasizes the human need for relationships with other persons and things rather than minimizing the role of the external world in psychic development.

Accordingly, this is an ambitious work. For example, drawing on the field of human development in order to penetrate Muir's psyche from his childhood in Scotland until his early years in Yosemite, Holmes explores the issue of Muir's efforts to develop

a mature male identity and a career. It seems clear that Muir was anxious about his distinctive status as a single man lacking a respected profession or even connections to nineteenth-century institutions central to most adult lives—whether a home, nuclear family, church or other community organizations. Holmes introduces Erik Erickson's useful concept of a moratorium—which the latter applied to Martin Luther, George Bernard Shaw, and others for whom it took years before they recognized their true callings—but dismisses it as offering too static a view, arguing that Muir was not in a holding pattern in his twenties and thirties but haltingly moved forward on both personal and public levels. He finds more insightful into Muir's life Daniel Levinson's theories on early adulthood as a period where a maturing male identity is slowly envisioned, formulated and then modified and reformulated over time.

Perhaps the most consistent pattern in Muir's life as delineated by the author, a key thesis of the book, is that of Muir's constant effort to reconstitute the familiar in every new setting, always viewing things through an earlier lens. Thus, there were no sudden transformations in his life. His conservative psychological stance precluded full breaks or conversions in favor of gradual transitioning. He did not make quick or clean breaks—whether in regard to his evangelist father, his own chosen course of study at Madison or his machinist work. This interpretation clarifies the enormous shock Muir felt during his walk through the South where the landscape and even the people seemed so alien to him. But it was there that Muir recognized that the world was made not for human omnipotence but for each entity dwelling within it, and that not every environment was appropriate to humans. Important to his reconstitution of the familiar was Muir's routine incorporation of flowers and ferns in his activities, correspondence and relationships, and he began to do so in his Wisconsin boyhood and continued into his California years. Holmes demonstrates their importance in his loving friendships with women, especially Jeanne Carr and also others, which he presents not as platonic though erotic relationships as have other authors, but as enmeshed in Christian love, if erotic. Plants also played an important role in the male friendships he began to develop in California.

It took Muir decades to develop his ever-deepening connection to the environment. As Holmes maintains, once "homed" in Yosemite, he was able to integrate the human, the natural and the divine. God no longer was simply the Maker of the world but the divine presence throughout it, suggesting Emersonian influences on Muir. His religious faith as well as his human relationships at last had led him to where he could assimilate specific environments into himself, and to Yosemite as his true home, whether he lived there or not.

The revisionist interpretations offered here are typically nuanced correctives of previous views. For examples, Holmes argues that the young Muir's plan to go to Scotland from Canada did not demonstrate indecisiveness about his future but was a means to end it, that the near loss of an eye in an industrial accident did not lead to an immediate resolution to be a naturalist, and that his visit to the Bonaventure Cemetery did not deflect him from traditional Christianity into full-blown egocentrism: it simply was a turning point where he, having become a religiocentric, placed the Divine at the center. These instances and others show that the author paints with subtle rather than broad strokes.

Reviewed by **Sally M. Miller**, a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and professor of history and managing editor of the *John Muir Newsletter* at the University of the Pacific. She is the author or editor of a dozen books including *John Muir: Life and Work* (1993) and *John Muir in Historical Perspective* (1999).

Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal. By James Wright Seely. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. xxi + 274 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, index, bibliography. Cloth \$29.95.

James Wright Seely's *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal* is largely a political history of the New Deal's critical role in the creation of early state parks in Texas. As with many states, Texas aggressively pursued federal assistance in funding and labor to establish its first state park system. Seely's stated purpose is to study this early stage of park development with reliable historical evidence, eliminating the "delightful stories" and "downright myths" (p. xiii) that unsatisfactorily answered questions about Texan parks for many years.

While other federal programs contributed, the popular Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) did the lion's share of the work required to create the first state parks in Texas. In a classic win-win situation, those who benefitted from park projects included the young men who enrolled in the CCC, the communities that profited from increased tourist trade, and the state as a whole that yielded unmeasurable rewards in the conservation of previously endangered natural and historic resources. Meanwhile, Texans and their out-of-state visitors enjoyed the beauty of a public landscape that served as the core of today's state park system. Between 1933 and 1942 the CCC helped build no fewer than thirty-two state parks in the Lone Star State.

Author Seely provides a detailed narrative of the politics involved in creating a modern park state system in Texas. He asserts that prior to the Great Depression Texan Congressmen "enjoyed vague affiliation with constituents back home" (p. 76). But politics in Texas changed with the coming of the New Deal. Texas Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson was only the most famous and most adept of a long list of park boosting politicians who brought federal projects to their home districts, to their credit as leaders and to their profit in political terms. Led by LBJ, Vice President John Garner, and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, the powerful Texas delegation in Washington helped secure \$20,000,000 in federal funding for state parks, of which Texas was required to match only \$40,000.

Readers should be forewarned of what *Parks for Texas* is not. It is not a social history of the CCC and its relationship to the communities it served. It is not an economic history, although there is passing reference to the economic impact of the CCC and state parks on state and local recovery from the Great Depression. Most importantly for readers of *Environmental History*, this is not an environmental history, no less an impact study of the Texas state parks on local and regional environments.

But *Parks for Texas* is a fine study of public policy, proving that political leaders have exploited hard economic times for not only personal, but also community gain. *Parks for Texas* inaugurates the Clifton and Shirley Caldwell Texas Heritage Series. If