

## Cast Out of Eden: The Untold Story of John Muir, Indigenous Peoples, and the American Wilderness

**Robert Aquinas McNally**

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Robert Aquinas McNally's *Cast Out of Eden* is a detailed biography of American naturalist and Sierra Club founder John Muir.

Born in Scotland, Muir arrived in the United States as a boy. He was brought by his father, who began a farm in Wisconsin, believing that white men had a divine right to the land, then cleared of Native Americans. As soon as he could, Muir left home in pursuit of his true love: the wild outdoors. An ardent Christian steeped in the ideas of Manifest Destiny, he ventured out into the North American wilderness in search of the Garden of Eden. He believed he found it in Yosemite.

A key figure in the history of American conservation, Muir's ideas of a pristine wilderness were infected by his father's ideas about Native Americans. These views influenced the US's national park system and the Sierra Club from their foundations. Noting theories of settler colonialism, the book brings the significance of how Native American civilizations were destroyed in the name of American conservationism to the fore throughout. Connected slurs in the movement (some archaic) are recognized, written with only their first letter followed by a line.

Chronicling Muir's life in detail, the book does an able job of exposing the hypocrisy behind Muir's philosophies: he expressed a spiritual dedication to preserving the American wilderness while also condoning the killing of Native Americans and the slaughter of the buffalo. But its generous coverage of the many paths that Muir took in his life also somewhat mutes his Yosemite National Park and Sierra Club triumphs, which become but two turning points in a lifetime that included many.

A revealing biography, *Cast Out of Eden* details the hypocrisy, cruelty, and astonishing achievements of John Muir.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (May / June 2024)

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