

CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MUIR WOODS NATIONAL MONUMENT

The White House
Washington

January 22, 1908

My dear Mr. Kent:

I have just received from Secretary Garfield your very generous letter enclosing the gift of Redwood Canyon to the National Government to be kept as a perpetual park for the preservation of the giant redwoods therein and to be named the Muir National Monument. You have doubtless seen my proclamation of January 9th, instant, creating this monument. I thank you most heartily for this singularly generous and public spirited action on your part. All Americans who prize the natural beauties of the country and wish to see them preserved undamaged, and especially those who realize the literally unique value of the groves of giant trees, must feel that you have conferred a great and lasting benefit upon the whole country.

I have a very great admiration for John Muir; but after all, my dear sir, this is your gift. No other land than that which you give is included in this tract of nearly 300 acres and I should greatly like to name the monument the Kent Monument if you will permit it.

Sincerely yours,

Theodore Roosevelt

Kentfield, California
January 30, 1908

To the President,
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Roosevelt:

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your message of appreciation, and hope and believe it will strengthen me to go on in an attempt to save more of the precious and vanishing glories of nature for a people too slow of perception.

Your kind suggestion of a change of name is not one that I can accept. So many millions of better people have died forgotten, that to stencil one's own name on a benefaction, seems to carry with it an implication of mundane immortality, as being something purchasable.

I have five good, husky boys that I am trying to bring up to a knowledge of democracy and to a realizing sense of the rights of the "other fellow", doctrines which you, sir, have taught with more vigor and effect than any man in my time. If these boys cannot keep the name of Kent alive, I am willing it should be forgotten.

I have this day sent you by mail a few photographs of Muir Woods, and trust that you will believe, before you see the real thing (which I hope will be soon) that our Nation has acquired something worth while.

Your truly,

William Kent



The White House
Washington

February 5, 1908

My dear Mr. Kent:

By George! you are right. It is enough to do the deed and not to desire, as you say, to "stencil one's own name on the benefaction." Good for you, and for the five boys who are to keep the name of Kent alive! I have four who I hope will do the same thing by the name of Roosevelt. Those are awfully good photos.

Sincerely yours,



Theodore Roosevelt

Martinez, Feb. 6, 1908

Dear Mr. Kent:

Seeing my name in the tender & deed of the Tamalpais Sequoias was a surprise of the pleasantest kind. This is the best tree-lover's monument that could possibly be found in all the forests of the world. You have done me great honor, & I am proud of it. Schools here & there have planted "Muir trees" in their playgrounds, & long ago Asa Gray named several plants for me; the most interesting of which is a sturdy frost-enduring daisy that I discovered on the shore of the Arctic Ocean near Icy Cape; a Sierra peak also & one of the Alaska glaciers bears my name, but these aboriginal woods, barring human action, will outlast them all, even the mountain & glacier. Compared with Sequoia glaciers are young fleeting things, & since the first Sequoia forests lifted their domes & spires to the sky, mountains great and small, thousands of them, have been weathered, ground down, washed away & cast into the sea; while two of the many species of Sequoia have come safely through all the geological changes & storms that have fallen upon them since Cretaceous times, surviving even the crushing destroying ice sheets of the glacial period.

Saving these woods from the axe & saw, from money-changers and water-changers, & giving them to our country & the world is in many ways the most notable service to God & man I've heard of since my forest wanderings began. A much needed lesson & blessing to saint & sinner alike & credit & encouragement to God. That so fine divine a thing should have come out of money made in Chicago! Wha wad'a' thocht it [sic]! Immortal Sequoia life to you.

Ever yours,

John Muir

