



PAST

John Marsh: The Life Line of an American Frontiersman



1799 - 1819 Raised in Danvers, Massachusetts on the family farm.

1819 - 1823 Graduated from Harvard in 1823. Participated in a 1820 sophomore class riot and was briefly expelled - readmitted the next year.

1823 - 1825 The first school teacher in Minnesota, then part of the old Northwest Territory. Wrote the first Sioux - English dictionary. Served briefly as the temporary Indian sub-agent for the Sioux at Fort St. Anthony. ▶



1825 - 1829 Met with President John Quincy Adams who appointed him the Indian sub-agent for the Winnebago tribe at Prairie du Chien.

1829 - 1832 Became a store keeper and fur trader at Prairie du Chien. During the Blackhawk War, raised a band of Sioux warriors to fight with the Americans. Fought the great 1832 cholera epidemic receiving a letter of commendation from the War Department.

◀ **1832 - 1835** Explored the Rockies and traveled to the 1833 Green River Rendezvous with a party of mountain men. Became a merchant and fur trader in Independence, Missouri. In 1835 left for Mexican Santa Fe and California.

1836-1837 Arrived in Alta California in 1836. Practiced medicine in Los Angeles before buying the 50,000 acre Los Meganos Rancho from Jose Noriega. Became the first settler in the great Central Valley and the first American pioneer in Contra Costa County.

1837 - 1848 Built a cattle and agricultural empire. Secretly worked for the peaceful entry of California into the United States. Marsh wrote letters urging immigration to California. With his instructions the first overland party from Missouri forged the California Trail to Rancho Los Meganos.

1848 - 1855 Discovered gold on the Yuba River. ▶ He and Abby Tuck married in 1851. Alice was born in 1852. Abby died in 1855. Construction of the great Stone House began in 1855.

1856 The Stone House completed. On September 24, 1856 murdered by three bandits on the road to Martinez. Only one of his killers was convicted.



PRESENT

The John Marsh Stone House



The Marsh House is an architectural treasure of immense historical importance. It bridges the gap between the missions, adobes and ranchos of the Mexican period and the stately mansions of the American era. The Marsh House will be the center piece of the new state historic park.

The house was built in 1856. The Marsh House was placed on the "National Register of Historic Places" in 1977 and it was designated one of "Save America's Treasures" in 1998. The exterior sandstone, quarried on the rancho, adds to its architectural significance.

The house is 36 ft. by 60 ft. and rises 40 ft. to the ridge of the roof. The interior walls are plastered brick. This inherent geometry is largely responsible for the structural survival of the House through the one and half centuries of neglect, misuse and earthquakes.



parlor room



stair hall



south wall

The wide stair hall extends from the front entrance to the matching rear entrance with arched topped sidelights. The parlor is a large room with a shallow arch of woodwork at its mid-point. Two marbled mantled fire places provide further articulation to the large room. The French windows allow direct access outside to the verandah. The dining room, stair hall, kitchen and paneled "keeping room" complete the remainder of the first floor.

The tower is open air with a high crenellated parapet with a 360 degree panoramic view from the delta to the foothills of Mt. Diablo. The tower was damaged after major earthquakes in 1868 and 1906. The stone was replaced by wood and shaped to emulate the damaged stone work.

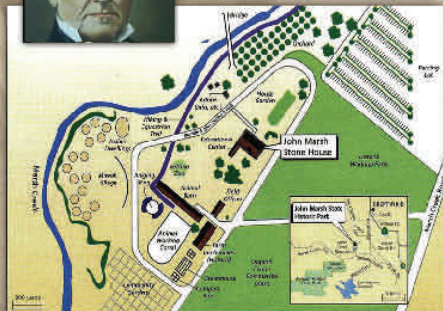
In recent years there have been emergency repairs of the failing stone and brickwork on three of the four walls of the house. However the south wall has collapsed and requires rebuilding for the stabilization of the house.

The John Marsh Historic Trust is now working to raise the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary to restore the collapsed south wall of the Marsh House.

Marsh FUTURE



Future of the John Marsh State Historic Park



The future at the John Marsh House is exciting. It will be the center piece of the new 3900 acre state historic park, the largest and most important historic park in the California system. The park will include a broad range of cultural, historical, research and recreational opportunities.



The house and surrounding grounds will be restored. The 7000 sq ft house can be a museum, teaching facility, community meeting center and park ranger headquarters.



The Marsh adobe will be reconstructed. Here John Marsh lived for twenty years while building his rancho and fighting off horse thieves and bandits.



The vineyards and orchards that began the agricultural growth of Contra Costa County will be replanted. We can create living examples of life on an early California rancho.



Recreating the Native American village along Marsh Creek is planned. Archeological discoveries now being made will teach visitors about the culture and lives of the first Americans who settled there.

Regional trails stretching from the delta to Mt. Diablo will add recreational opportunities for those wanting to explore the beautiful backcountry. Wildlife habitat will be restored and endangered species will be protected. Native flora will be reintroduced after two centuries of overgrazing.

The house and state historic park will be an important cultural, historical and recreational resource for the Bay Area and the State of California.