

FOR RELEASE AFTER 2:00 P.M.  
SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 1967

Office of the Press Secretary  
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

---

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
AT CEREMONY TO SALUTE GEORGE PERKINS MARSH  
ROCKEFELLER HOME, WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

Mr. Secretary, Governor Hoff,

We are gathered here today to pay tribute to a man and an idea.

The man is George Perkins Marsh, for whom this house was home for so many years. The idea is conservation and its precept that man lives most comfortably and performs most nobly when he is functioning in harmony with nature.

George Perkins Marsh was born in this community one hundred and sixty-six years ago. This house, this countryside, and Marsh's writings, "Man and Nature," are woven inextricably.

This home was the base from which he became a friend of the land. From here, he walked to the top of Mount Tom. From here he roamed the eastern slopes of the Green Mountains, and from here he loafed along the Queechee River Valley -- noting even in that early date that erosion was already taking its toll, gullies were appearing in the denuded hills where great trees had been cut clear, and the streams were carrying away much of the topsoil.

George Perkins Marsh once wrote that he was "forest born" and in his youth, "the bubbling brook, the trees, the flowers, the wild animals were persons, not things" to him. In this setting in which these thoughts were born, they appear again in their true luster.

He was a man, trained to the law, with a restless, questing mind. He was an innovator with bold, fresh ideas. He was a school teacher, a Congressman, an Ambassador.

He pursued an ever-widening group of intellectual interests without ever relinquishing his study of the relationship of man to nature, and he did it in 20 languages.

languages.

"Man and Nature" was the first book in this country to recognize the full significance of man as an environmental agent, the first to realize the appalling losses caused by the destruction of forests and other resources, and the first to propose remedial actions for the future. It gained for Marsh -- rightfully -- the title of "the mighty prophet of the whole American conservation movement."

The prophet would be very pleased to find his successors gathered here today giving high priority to conservation.

We can take considerable pride in what has been done -- and will be done to preserve and enhance nature's beauty -- and make it available in recreation opportunities for the people.

Vermont, for example, is abundant with water -- and under the leadership of Governor Hoff, you have used and improved these water resources. In my parched home country of the southwest, we are not so fortunate with water. Every drop is precious. Yesterday, I dedicated a new, man-made lake in Hartland which embodies the concept of Water Harvesting. Local, state, and national agencies have exciting plans for the development of that lake.

As I drove into Woodstock through the Ottauquechee Valley, Governor Hoff told me of several proposals that are being considered to develop this region as a self-contained, intrastate watershed, emphasizing both recreation and conservation.

Those of you in this valley have an unparalleled opportunity for a comprehensive, broad-based recreation and conservation effort. The resources of your state and federal governments, as well as private enterprise, are available under various programs. But, the initiative remains yours, and yours alone.

This is an innovative approach to environmental living, and I envision this valley as a model for similar watersheds all over our country.

If you can clean up the 36 miles of streams of this Ottauquechee Valley, a showplace of scenic beauty, a sparkling example of unpolluted water -- you will have set an important example for the nation.

I cannot conclude this ceremony without a word about the present occupants of this house and their own role as successors to George Marsh.

You who know 54 Elm Street are aware that only three families have lived here since it was built in 1805 and 1806 by Architect Henry Hudson Holly. After the Charles Marsh family, there were the Frederick Billings -- the family of our hostess who acquired it in 1869 and give it its imposing Queen Anne Style of the 1880's.

Mary French Rockefeller tells me of so many happy summertimes and holidays that she and her family spent here.

Her husband is America's leading citizen conservationist today. From the Grand Tetons to the Virgin Islands -- and here in your valley -- he has made conservation and recreation his life's work.

He once told me, "Our leisure time may well be our Achilles Heel." No one knows better than the President, the Secretary of Interior, and the head of the National Park Service that Laurance Rockefeller has devoted his mind and his fortune to making our leisure a boon to humanity.

If our land, our towns, our parks become more beautiful, more useable, it will be in large measure because of the devoted services of Laurance Rockefeller.

Last night, in the candlelight of his home, we came upon these lovely lines from Hafiz, and I think you will see why we found them particularly fitting to the beauty-minded people of this country:

"If thou of fortune be bereft  
And in thy store  
There be but left  
Two loaves -- sell one  
And with thy dole  
Buy Hyacinths to feed thy soul."

So it is with great pleasure here in this delightful Woodstock country that I participate in this tribute to those who have lived in this house and place the official National Landmark upon it as recognition of hyacinths for man's soul,

# # #