

THEME: Literature

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Slabsides, John Burroughs Study

AND/OR COMMON

Slabsides

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

just west of West Park

--NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

West Park

 VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

25th

STATE

New York

CODE

30

COUNTY

Ulster

CODE

111

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

John Burroughs Memorial Association
c/o The American Museum of Natural History

STREET & NUMBER

Central Park West at 79th Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

 VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Ulster County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Kingston

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Slabsides is located within the 173 acre John Burroughs Sanctuary, one mile west of Riverby. Although the distance from the Burroughs estate is not great, the change in terrain is marked. The cabin sits on a rocky ledge, at the foot of a cliff in a marshy area once a lake bottom. The marsh, which Burroughs drained for the purpose of cultivation has reverted to its wild state. Although some houses have been built nearby to the east, the cabin still appears to be located in the wilderness. It is reached by a narrow dirt road and finally a footpath. In the more than fifty years that have passed since the death of Burroughs, very few changes have occurred at Slabsides. Grilles have been installed over the windows and a few logs have been replaced. The roof has been reshingled once. The interior, with all its furnishings is unchanged.

Twice every year, the John Burroughs Memorial Association hosts an open house at Slabsides. The grounds of the Sanctuary are open to visitors the year round, but tours of the cabin are given by appointment only.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John Burroughs

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

John Burroughs published his first significant nature essay in the Atlantic Monthly in 1865 and until his death in 1921 continued to produce at an amazing rate articles and books in which he presented realistic facts about the natural world in an interesting and nonpedantic way. Burroughs did more than any other popular writer of his time to create a widely receptive climate for conservation legislation, and he is credited with establishing the nature essay as a literary form.

In 1895 John Burroughs built a cabin about two miles west of his home at "Riverby" in Ulster County, New York. Called "Slabsides" after its bark-covered siding, the cabin became the writer's summer residence and retreat from some of the nuisances of notoriety. There he observed nature and wrote many of the essays collected in Far and Near (1904), The Way Nature (1905), and other books. Burroughs entertained many of the great men of his day at "Slabsides," and the cabin soon became as well known as its builder. Although Burroughs began to spend the greater part of his summers at "Woodchuck Lodge" in Delaware County after 1908, he continued to stay at "Slabsides" intermittently until his death. Preserved exactly as it was during Burroughs' lifetime, the cabin contains the furniture he made by hand. Owned by the John Burroughs Memorial Association, the cabin can be seen by appointment.

HISTORY

(For a detailed biography, refer to "Woodchuck Lodge".) In Far and Near, John Burroughs tells how he came to build "Slabsides" in 1895:

I was offered a tract of wild land, barely a mile from home, that contained a secluded nook and a few acres of level, fertile land shut off from the vain and noisy world ... by a wooded, precipitous mountain ... and built me a rustic house there, which I call 'Slabsides,' because its outer walls are covered with slabs. I might have given it a prettier name, but not one more fit, or more in keeping with the mood that brought me thither. A slab is the first cut from the log, and the bark

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Norman Foerster, "John Burroughs," Dictionary of American Biography vol. 3 (scribners, New York, 1943).
- Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley, "A History of Slabsides" (n.p., 1967).
- John McDermott, "Sites Associated with John Burroughs in Ulster County, New York," A Special Report for the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, July 29, 1968.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 16 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	5 8 5 5 1 0	4 6 2 8 0 0 0	B	1 8	5 8 5 5 0 0	4 6 2 7 0 0 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1 8	5 8 5 0 0 0	4 6 2 7 0 0 0	D	1 8	5 8 5 0 0 0	4 6 2 8 0 0 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service.

DATE

February 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER



DATE

10/12/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Slabsides

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goes with it. It is like the first cut from the leaf, which we call the crust, and which the children reject, but which we older ones prefer. I wanted to take a fresh cut of life,--something that had the bark on, or, if you please, that was like a well-browned and hardened crust....

Burroughs built the cabin with the help of a local carpenter on a rocky ledge at the north end of his newly acquired property. "Slabsides" had only one story, but the attic was commodious. A stone chimney stood at one gabled end, and a rustic porch extended across the face of the cottage. Exposed beams were logs with the bark on them. Burroughs covered inside seams with split birch saplings and also used yellow birch for some of the trim. The ground floor was a single room that functioned as a study, parlor, kitchen, dining room, and bedroom. Upstairs were a partitioned bedroom and an open dormitory for guests.

Burroughs made most of the furniture for "Slabsides" with his own hands. He searched the woods for sticks of odd shapes that might be used for a doornob, an arm of a settee, a hatrack, or the like. He used a variety of woods in his work; staghorn sumac, yellow birch, hickory, and hornbeam gave his furniture distinctiveness and his cabin character.

Burroughs built the retreat so that he could observe nature and write in quiet. But he also wanted a place where he could entertain visitors who enjoyed the out-of-doors. The first overnight guest arrived on March 21, 1896, and for years afterwards the list grew and multiplied as Burroughs' fame widened and heightened. Many of those who came recorded their experience in print, and the cabin soon became as well known as its builder. In spite of the flow of visitors, Burroughs did find time to work at "Slabsides." There he wrote much of Whitman: A Study (1896) and the essays that went into Far and Near (1904), The Ways of Nature (1905), and other books.

Because of the increasing number of sightseers who invaded his privacy and made it difficult for him to work, Burroughs spent his summers after 1908 at "Woodchuck Lodge" in a less traveled region of New York. He still returned to "Slabsides," however, and the rustic cabin continued to be a favorite subject for journalists and writers. Burroughs entertained friends there for the last time on November 7, 1920, four months before his death.

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Shortly after the death of the naturalist, a group of friends and admirers formed the John Burroughs Memorial Association to preserve places associated with his life. In 1923 Henry Ford bought the nine acres on which "Slabsides" stood and donated them to the Association. Other additions came in later years, and in 1966 several parcels totaling 98.15 acres were added to create a John Burroughs Sanctuary.

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Beginning at the forking of the road to Slabsides from Burroughs Drive, proceed south along the west curb of Burroughs Drive to its intersection with the 400' contour. Thence proceed south along said contour for 500', thence due west to the 350' contour, thence southerly and westerly, following said contour for 2800', thence north-northwest in a straight line to the southern terminus of the eastern curb of the Slabsides Road, thence proceed north to the point of origin, along said curb.

These boundaries enclose Slabsides and a portion of the surrounding terrain, while excluding posthistoric developments, so as to preserve the natural and historic features of the landmark.