

Fort Vancouver 10th August 1828¹

To The Governor Deputy Govr. & Committee
Honble. Hudsons Bay Coy.

HONBLE. SIRS,

On the 8th Inst. at 10 P.M. an American of the name of Black² reached this place, in his opinion at the time, the only survivor of a Party of Nineteen (19) Americans, the remainder having been massacred by the Natives of the Umqua River. Black says that he and seventeen others were engaged to Mr. Smith³ (this is the same that came to the Flat Heads 1824/5 and also whom Capt. Simpson saw last Jany. at St. Francisco) & they left St. Francisco January last with about three hundred Horses bound for their Depot at Salt Lake.

Leaving St. Francisco they ascended the North Branch of Bonaventura trapping Beaver as they went along till the 14th May, when finding it impossible to cross the Mountains with their Horses in an Eastern direction they turned West & fell on a River which took them to the Coast, & proceeded along it to the Umpqua where they were defeated. At the moment of attack Mr. Smith was off with two men in a Canoe to ascend & examine Bridge River, a stream that flows into the Umpqua, to see if he could find a road to take his Horses—a short time after Mr. Smiths departure, their being about a hundred Indians in the Camp & the Americans busy arranging their arms which got wet the day previous, the Indians suddenly rushed on them, two got hold of his (Blacks) Gun to take it from him, in contending with them he was wounded on the hands by their Knives & another came with an axe to strike him on the head, which he avoided by Springing on one side & received the blow on the back. He then let go his Gun & rushed to the woods, as he was coming away he saw two

¹ B. 223/b/4, fos. 23-24d.

² Arthur Black.

³ Jedediah Smith. See H. C. Dale, *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829* (Glendale, Calif., 1941), and M. Sullivan, *The Travels of Jedediah Smith* (Santa Ana, Calif., 1934).

Indians on one Virgil,¹ another, Davis was in the water & Indians were pursuing him in a Canoe, a third was on the ground & a band of Indians were butchering him with axes—after wandering in the woods during four days he fell on the Ocean about (by his description of the place) two miles North of the Umpqua & knowing this Establishment to be here followed the Coast to the Killemau Village; the first Indian he saw wanted to pillage him of his knife but this he resisted. A little after he fell in with seven who stripped him of all his cloathing except his Trousers, another party joined these & a quarrel took place between the two Parties as he thinks about himself: during the fray he found an opportunity of reaching the Woods & saw no Indians till he got to the Killimaux Village, here he got some to take him across Land to the Willamette to one of our Freemen who forwarded him to this place—on the 10 Inst.² (yesterday) at mid-day Mr. Smith arrived with the two men who were with him in the Canoe, he was as I already stated gone with them to examine the Banks of the River; after proceeding a few miles he returned & when within sight of his Camp seeing none of his people at the place, it struck him with surprise & while looking about to see where his people could be, an Indian from the shore spoke to an Indian with him, the latter immediately turned round, seized Mr. Smiths Rifle & dived in the River, & at the same time natives that were hid in the Bushes fired on Mr. Smith & his two men, who escaped by paddling to the opposite bank; he ascended a Hill from whence he saw his Camp distinctly, but seeing none of his people & from none of them coming forward when he was fired on though within reach, he naturally concluded they were all cutt off, shaped his course for the ocean & fell on it at Alique River³ & followed the Coast to the Killamau Village where got Indians to take him to the Williemette & accompany him to this place. When he was

¹ Thomas Virgin, whose name was given to Virgin River, a tributary of the Colorado River.

² This letter was probably written in two or more instalments, of which the first was written on the 10th.

³ Mr. Lewis A. McArthur, President of the Oregon Historical Society, thinks it probable that Alique River can be identified as Alsea River.

attacked he had two hundred & twenty eight Horses & Mules, about Seven hundred & eighty Beaver, fifty or Sixty large Otters & two or three Sea do. two hundred wt. of Beads & one hundred wt. of Goods & Tobacco, the Indians who brought Mr. Smith say their were fifteen killed, which with four that got here accounts for the whole party. Immediately on hearing this melancholy intelligence Indian Messingers were dispatched towards the Umqua with directions to the Natives if they found any of the survivors to shew them every kindness & to convey them to this place & that we would reward them handsomely for their trouble. On hearing Blacks narrative I enquired of him if they had any quarrel with the Natives, he says the only difference they had was about an Axe which the Natives stole ten days before they attacked the Party, to recover which Mr. Smith secured an Indian & tied him, but on the latter promising to bring it back he was liberated & he brought it back & that previous to reaching the Umpqua, they had two skirmishes with the natives in which they killed two of them. Mr. Smith gives the same account. The Indians who accompanied Mr. Smith to this place also report that the quarrel originated about an axe & the Natives conceiving them to be a different people from us had acted in this treacherous manner towards them; this unfortunate affair is extremely injurious to us as the success & facility with which the Natives have accomplished their object lowers Europeans in their estimation & consequently very much diminishes our security. As for us every means in our power will be exerted to assist Mr. Smith in recovering his property.

I am

Honble. Sirs

Your Obt. Humble Sert.

JNO. McLOUGHLIN

Inclosed is a Sketch of Mr. Smiths Track from St. Francisco to Fort Vancouver.¹

¹ This sketch has not been traced, but see Dale, *Ashley-Smith Explorations* and Oregon Hist. Quar., XLI, Maloney, "Camp Sites of Jedediah Smith", pp. 305-23