


**From:** Bob Zybach ZybachB@NWMapsCo.com   
**Subject:** Fwd: Umpqua Memorial Project: Bolon Island Sign Critique  
**Date:** July 27, 2023 at 2:55 PM

BZ

**To:** DEHN Beth \* TIC beth.dehn@tic.oregon.gov

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Hi Beth:

Here is the final version for the Committee to consider after receiving feedback from reviewers. Mostly people were in agreement with the concerns — “too little information, and also too much!” No disagreement with the key points, a couple of typos caught, and the picture with the human scale (Dale Hanson) got cut in half, so I attached a smaller version.

Our request to the Historical Marker Committee is to: 1) remove the existing panel for reasons given below, 2) replace it with a panel that is more accurate and meaningful historically and more relevant locally, and 3) give these actions a high priority.

For this purpose I have included photos of the original sign and of the current sign with scale and a close-up of text with this email. Several of us have had discussions and correspondence on these concerns and this opportunity over the past year or more, and I have tried to briefly summarize those concerns below.

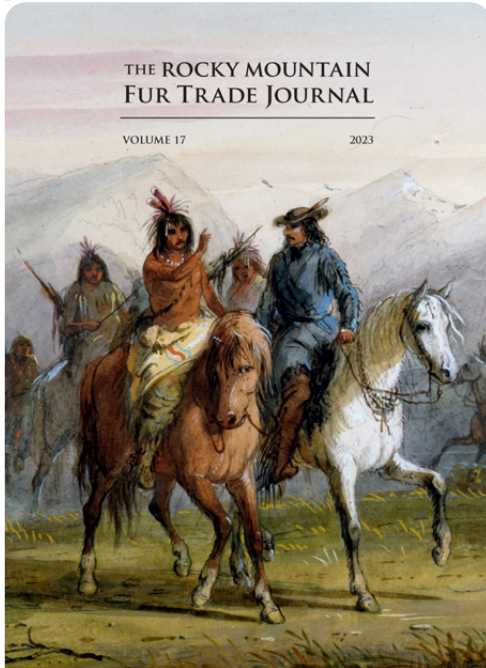
The three main concerns with the current sign are design, content, and omissions.

To begin, the older sign is distinctive, familiar, easy to read, and — perhaps excepting the last sentence — mostly accurate and relevant to its location. By contrast, the new sign is not local history, or even state history, but a brief biography of Jedediah Smith dominated by a map of the western US, an unrealistic illustration of idealized beaver trappers on the Mississippi River, and littered with tiny print in a variety of fonts scattered everywhere. The closer you look, the more words you see. For example, the photograph of a beaver in northern Mexico is labeled “beaver” in tiny print, and then the photographer’s name in even tinier print above that. Why is any of that even necessary on an official Beaver Board sign in the Beaver State with a large beaver already depicted above the “Oregon History” title?

The old sign has the date and circumstances that brought Jedediah Smith and his men near this location on July 13, 1828; the new sign has the dates 1799-1831 — Jed’s lifespan, during which he spent a week or so in this location, and about six months total in present-day Oregon. The old sign says Jed’s men were killed by “the Indians”; the new sign shows a drawing of a family dwelling from an 1858 newspaper — but credits the Oregon Historical Society as the source — which it describes as a “Quuiich winter village.” It’s a single building. Then the map says “Kelawatsets” and the text says “Native Americans” and “L. Umpqua,” in addition to “*the Quuiich*.” A more accurate version might say “local natives” or include the names of adjacent tribes that were also involved in the killings and thefts.

On August 10, 1828, McLoughlin wrote that Smith’s men had been “massacred.” Smith used the same term in his letter to the US Secretary of War in 1830, and so did government land surveyor Gordon in 1857. The most famous book about Smith is by Morgan in 1953, who titled Chapter 13 “The Umpqua Massacre.” The old sign calls it a massacre, and so does the dictionary. The two following links are to a current YouTube video with over 230,000 views with “Umpqua Massacre” in its title; as does the current scholarly journal of the Museum of the Mountain Man, which features an article by historian Tom Holloway titled “Killing Competition with Kindness: Jedediah Smith, George Simpson, and the Aftermath of the Umpqua Massacre.” Yet the new sign states “Skirmished with Kelawatsets” on the map, and in the text states: “A skirmish erupted between the trappers and local Native Americans, *the Quuiich* (L.Umpqua).” They weren’t “Americans,” native or otherwise, few people know that the “L.” stands for “Lower.” and it certainly wasn’t a “skirmish” that somehow “erunted.” This is

politics and semantics, not history.



2023 Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal - Volume 17 - Museum of the Mountain Man  
[museumofthemountainman.com](http://museumofthemountainman.com)



Mountain Men vs. Umpqua Warriors : The Umpqua Massacre  
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

We think a high priority should be given to replacing the panel because of these historical inaccuracies and local irrelevancies in light of current popular and academic accountings, but also because of the significant “errors of omission” in the new sign.

The slight attention given the Native American/L. Umpqua/Kelawatsets/*Quuiich* and their “village” gives a distorted and inaccurate perspective of the people who lived here in 1826 and 1828. The conflict with Smith and his men had a significant and lasting impact on coastal families as well as on US and British claims of “Joint Occupancy.” These people are represented, but barely, and very poorly. These were the people who lived here for generations; Smith and his men, horses, and mules were just rude, wealthy visitors who would be gone shortly if they weren’t stopped first.

And where are McLeod, LaFramboise, and Starnoose? The absence of the 1826 meeting with the Hudsons Bay Comnanv. which was the first known local contact with white neople. horses. cloth. metal tools. and guns — and



company, which was the first and most common name for the people, society, town, nation, etc., and given to them certainly the first historical contact and accountings with coastal native communities on the central and southern Oregon Coast — seems like a significant oversight, given the large amount of words and space on the new sign. Likewise, the political and religious importance of the collaboration between Americans, British, and regional native communities in the common recovery of stolen goods and the burial of 11 victims — quite likely with both Catholic and Protestant prayers — was an event of national and international importance, and was recognized as such at the time. And should be still, according to opinion.

Please consider our request to replace the current panel with one that is more accurate historically and relevant locally.

Thank you,

Bob  
Umpqua Memorial Committee  
Creswell, Oregon









# Jedediah Smith

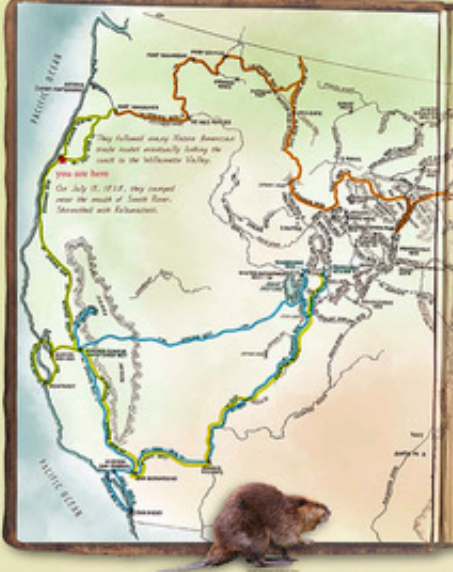
(1799–1831)



**J**edediah Smith's explorations in the American West began when he was 21 and lasted until his death at age 32. He crisscrossed the region in search of beaver pelts and new travel routes. His travel journals became a foundation for the first accurate maps of what is now the western United States.



*John C. Fremont's 1848 map was one of the first accurate depictions of the West. Information in Jedediah Smith's journals, this and similar maps helped shape the course of America's westward expansion.*




*They followed many Native American trade routes eventually finding the coast in the Willamette Valley.*

*On July 8, 1818, they camped near the mouth of Lewis River. Struck with Klamathitis.*

*Jedediah Smith, age 31, began his adventure.*

**THE TRAVELS OF  
Jedediah Smith  
IN THE WEST  
1822-1831**

— Expeditions 1822–1827  
— Expeditions 1827–1830  
— Return Trip 1829



### A life of Exploration

— After three years in the Rocky Mountains, Jedediah Smith led trapping expeditions to California in 1826 and 1827. Both times he was ordered to leave by Mexican authorities.

— On the second expedition, Smith purchased more than 300 horses. Unable to cross the Sierras with their large herd, Smith's party drove them to the Pacific coast, then north into Oregon. The large party would have made a substantial environmental impact and likely angered the native people whose lands they passed through. Disagreements about trade

coast. Tillamook Native Americans delivered the trappers to the British Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, which sent out an expedition to investigate, accompanied by Smith. They recovered some of their horses and beaver pelts, and more important for us today, Smith's travel journals.



Illustration of a Quailich winter village. Villages similar to this Quailich winter village were common along Jedediah Smith's journey up the Oregon Coast.

and differing notions of property and trespass probably also led to conflict.

On July 13, 1828, Smith's party camped near the mouth of Smith River. A skirmish erupted between the trappers and local Native Americans, the Quailich (L. Umpqua). Smith and three others escaped and made their way on foot north along the Oregon

Jedediah Smith returned to the Rocky Mountains from his California ventures with little profit but a wealth of knowledge about the West unrivaled by any other Euro-American. After a season trapping in Montana, Smith retired to St. Louis and began leading freight wagons across the Santa Fe Trail. In May 1831, he rode ahead to search for water and was killed by Comanche warriors.



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