

Castor Canadensis

The Journal of the Jedediah Smith Society ♦ University of the Pacific, Stockton, California



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Spring 2023

The Journal of the Jedediah Smith Society · University of the Pacific, Stockton, California

Vol. 2, No. 1

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*Our cover photo, taken by JSS member Peter Meyerhof, captures the beauty of the Pacific Coast just north of Crescent City, California, not far from Jed’s trail.

Jed’s journeys into the American West were arduous—and fatal for many of his men—yet he frequently extolled the magnificence of his surroundings. He delighted in the “undulating prairie” of Mandan country, in the “beautiful encrustation found in the Salt Plain,” in the “rich chocolate loam” of the Sacramento River where, he said, “the whole face of the country is a most beautiful green, resembling a flourishing wheat field.” Jed may have epitomized the rugged individualist and aggressive capitalist, but he also exhibited a vivid aesthetic sensibility.

A member of the Jedediah Smith Society Board, Bob Zybach holds a PhD in Environmental Sciences from Oregon State University. He is the author of several articles on a wide range of topics, including the use and management of Oregon forests and early Indian trails. Zybach also has extensive knowledge of Jed's travels through Oregon. He has been recognized for his work with at-risk high school students and for his research into the history of blacks in Oregon. He is a distant relative of David Jackson.

The 2023 Jedediah Smith Society Rendezvous: From Smith River, California, to Fort Vancouver in 1828

by Bob Zybach

I wanted to be the first to view a country on which the eyes of a white man had never gazed and to follow the course of rivers that run through a new land. Jedediah S. Smith, March 1831



This painting of Fort Vancouver was made in 1845 or 1846 by British military spy Henry Warre while under orders to “obtain a general knowledge of the capabilities of the Oregon Territory in a Military point of view” in “perfect secrecy, so far as possible.” The fort was being constructed during Smith’s winter 1828-29 stay there, and he may well have been among its first occupants.

The April 2-5, 2023, Jedediah Smith Rendezvous followed Jedediah Smith’s 1828 route from Smith River, California, to Smith River, Oregon, and finally to Fort Vancouver. The theme of the Rendezvous was a comparison and contrast of the foods, people, and landscapes Smith and his men encountered with those of our time.

To assist participants in learning about this theme, I assembled four Guidebooks, one for each day of the tour. Each Guidebook includes a detailed and documented map of Smith’s 1828 routes and campsite locations, beginning south of Hoopa Valley in northwest California on May 2 and ending with his return to Fort Vancouver on December 11. (Two representative pages of the Guidebooks, including instructions for their use, follow this essay. Copies of all four Guidebooks will be available on the Jedediah Smith Society website shortly after renovations to the site are complete.)

At each campsite from May 2 (Hogback Ridge) through July 13 (Defeat River), either Smith or his clerk Harrison Rogers made daily journal entries regarding their foods, encounters with natives, travel progress, and campsite locations. These journals constitute the earliest historical documentation of the lands and people of northern California and the southern Oregon Coast. Transcriptions of the journals appear in the Guidebooks in chronological order and are indexed by page numbers to the maps. Daily journal entries after July 13 were written by Alexander Roderick McLeod, Chief Trader for the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) based at Fort Vancouver. Our Rendezvous participants could thus read original verbatim eyewitness accounts by three “journalists” of native peoples, customs, and geographical features from the 1820s, and compare or contrast them to their own experiences and environments nearly

200 years later. For anyone who wishes to conduct further studies, the Guidebooks also contain reference lists of the journals themselves and interpretations by scholars.

An excellent hunter and beaver trapper, and a proven survivor and leader, Smith has often been compared to Lewis, Clark, and Fremont as one of the most important explorers and cartographers of the western US. He was also an important ethnologist shortly before the indigenous people he met and described were ravaged by disease and whose cultures were forever changed by guns, trade goods, and social contacts with foreign white (and black) people and their powerful domesticated animals.

Smith and Rogers traveled with 16 or 18 armed men and 300 horses and mules loaded with traps, guns, ammunition, hundreds of beaver skins, camping equipment, and trade items—mostly beads. Travel routes were determined by topography, river crossings, and pasturage. Fresh water, prairies, and grassy meadows were essential for survival; elk and Indian trails along ridgelines and riparian areas were key travel routes; fallen logs, cliffs, and nearly impenetrable thick brush—predominantly rhododendron, salmonberry, salal, hazel, and huckleberry—were frequent impediments.

Several people were helpful in planning and coordinating the Rendezvous, including Wayne Knauf, Milton von Damm, Rich Cimino, Joe Green, and myself. Joe Molter supplied field research and suggestions for the California leg of the trip; Jim Auld provided significant insight into the Umpqua disaster and burial site history; and Jim Anderson made arrangements and contacts for the Oregon City and Fort Vancouver visits.

Our traveling Rendezvous was specifically intended to be a series of one-day events so that we could accommodate local participants and others unable to be present for our entire journey north. The four Guidebooks were developed with this benefit in mind, but also for anyone who wishes to visit these locations later.

All four days of the Rendezvous began with a 9:00 a.m. rendezvous in the parking lots of the local Best Western Motels in Crescent City, Bandon, Reedsport, and Dallas, respectively. From there we formed a caravan to each of the designated stops for that day's travel. Amazingly, no one got lost; there were no vehicle problems, no disputes, and everyone reached each stop or mealtime as scheduled and in good spirits.

Our first day followed Smith's and Rogers' daily journal entries from their June 14, 1828, Cushing Creek campsite, just south of present-day Crescent City, north to their July 2 Coquille River camp near Bandon.

At the Crescent Beach Overlook, as shown in the Guidebooks, we could see the Cushing Creek campsite where Smith, his men, and their many horses and mules sojourned for two days. They had just arrived at low tide from their camp at Endert Beach when Rogers wrote, "Plenty of grass on the mountain for our horses, but very steep for them to climb after it."

As Smith discovered, Cushing Creek was much better:

It being low tide by passing around a point in the water I was enabled to travel along the shore and encamped in a prairie [sic] of about 100 acres of tolerable grass. In the vicinity was a plenty of Elk sign.

So, he decided to stay another day:

I lay by to recruit my horses. Several of us went hunting and Joseph Lapoint in the morning killed one of the largest [animals] Elk I had ever seen. He was not very fat but [in] tolerable [order] good meat. His size induced me to weigh the meat which I found to weigh 695 lbs neat weight exclusive of the tongue and some other small pieces which would have made it above 700 lbs.

Rogers:

A number of Inds. visited our camp again to day, bringing fish, clams, strawberries, and a root that is well known by the traders west of the Rocky mountains by the name of commeser, for trade.

The Indians to which Rogers refers were probably the native Tolowa, and they had an abundance and variety of quality foods for meals and trade. The men in Smith's party typically shared a diet of deer, bear, and elk as they traversed northern California and western Oregon, but their fare also included an occasional horse, their only dog, and flour—with a greater variety when they could trade beads for food. The travelers' first encounters with lamprey eels were mostly negative, but even these creatures were soon eagerly eaten, along with berries, fish, clams, and camas.

From Cushing Creek we followed Smith through Elk Valley. Today it consists mostly of trees, buildings, lawns, and fields, but Smith described it this way in 1828:

One mile along the beach north & then turning to the right I traveled 4 Miles across a prairie leaving a range of hills on the East running North not far distant and thickly covered with Hemlock & Cedar. The prairie was covered with brakes bushes & grass & had many springs.

And Rogers:

The day clear and warm, plenty of muskeatoes, large horse flies, and small knats to bite us and pesterous early of mornings and late in the evenings. The timber along the bottom, cedar, hemlock of the largest size, under brush, hazle, briars, aldar, and sundry other s[h]rubs; the soil very rich and black.

From Elk Valley we moved to Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park because of its common history with the Jedediah Smith Society and for photo opportunities. It is doubtful that Jed's party entered this area because of insufficient pasturage and obstructions like fallen trees and limbs, although they probably explored some of its western perimeter where there are many trees "of the largest size."

We were surprised to find no interpretive signs, pamphlets, or other information about Jedediah Smith in the Park or in the adjacent Hiouchi Interpretive Center. We learned that even the tiny Jedediah Smith Visitor Center would be closed in fall and winter. We were later informed by Patrick Taylor, Interpretation and Education Program Manager for Redwoods National and State Parks, that a project is in the works to update the Park's informational and interpretive signage, and that the Jedediah Smith Society will be consulted regarding proposed texts and installations.

After a stop at the expedition's campsite on the north side of Smith River, we entered Oregon, crossed the Winchuck and Chetco Rivers and were treated to pizza by Tolowa Dee-Ni' Nation chairperson, Jeri Lynn Thompson, and her daughter, Katrina Thompson-Upton, at her Northwest American Indian Coalition office in Brookings. Another Tolowa mother and daughter were also present, and together with our group and a local journalist, more than a dozen individuals discussed Smith and Northwest Indian history. We carried on a meaningful dialogue focused on Smith's expedition through Northwest Indian communities, recognizing the subsequent negative impact on the indigenous peoples who consider these areas their home "since time immemorial." As we explored the legacy of these encounters, we also contemplated how to improve regional racial and ethnic relationships and our shared histories.

Our first coastal stop in Oregon was Harris Beach State Park where we discussed the broken cliffs and stretches of sandy beaches that extend from northern California to Vancouver Island and still show the dramatic effects—and distinct travel barriers—that remain from the January 26, 1700, Cascadia earthquake and ensuing tsunami. This catastrophic event has been precisely dated using Japanese tsunami documentation and tree-ring analyses of submerged trees. Survivor accounts undoubtedly remained in the generational memory and stories of the native people Smith encountered. Smith's pack trail was the first along the southern Oregon Coast—memorable for its sheer cliffs and deep brush-filled ravines. Much of today's Highway 101 follows this route, but the oral histories are forever lost.



Harris Beach looking south.

The geological effects of the 1700 Cascadia earthquake and subsequent tsunami, still apparent today, formed formidable barriers to Smith's expedition. Note the people and driftwood at the base of the cliff for scale.
April 2, 2023, photo by Peter Meyerhof.

As Smith reached the Rogue River, he increasingly noticed indications of European trade items on a route established in January of the previous year by HBC Chief Trader McLeod. An excellent trapper in his own right, McLeod was promoted by the HBC to brigade leader. Like Smith and Rogers, he kept a daily journal as he looked for new sources of beaver.

Because Smith and Rogers' 1828 route and campsites retraced McLeod's, the Guidebooks also include McLeod's journal entries for 1826 and 1827.

On July 2, after leaving Sixes River, Rogers noted the topography:

The country, for 3 days past, appears to leave the effects of earth quakes at some period past, as it is quite cut to pieces in places and very broken, although it affords such an abundance of good grass and clover.

When the expedition reached the Brush Creek trail, which skirted the eastern perimeter of Humbug Mountain, Smith's party camped in a grassy prairie of about 1,000 acres. Today this prairie is a manicured State Park with planted trees, mowed fields, and tightly packed campsites. After a drive through this area for context, we met in the Day Use area across the highway, which gives the appearance of an ancient campsite—a place comprised of an old-growth myrtlewood grove, huckleberries, a fish-bearing stream, and shelter against coastal winds and storms.

Other than the obvious towns, highways, roadside weeds, and parklands, the principal differences between the landscapes that Smith, Rogers, and McLeod described in 1828 and the ones we observed in 2023 were (1) far fewer grassy prairies, meadows, and brushy fields (trees, crops, construction); (2) many more trees over a much larger area now (seeding and planting); (3) significantly fewer large, old trees now (logging, windstorms, and wildfire); and (4) more deadwood along the coast and bays now. This latter condition exists mainly because for hundreds of generations greater numbers of people gathered driftwood, limbs, and logs for firewood, construction materials, and tools. Such practices mostly ended 50 to 75 years ago.

The final stop for the day was Bandon where participants were encouraged to visit the 1854 Nasomah Massacre memorial. Here, an interpretive sign fronts a small landscaped park with a short walkway featuring culturally significant native plants and a symbolic art installation. The sign features an evocative poetic recounting of Nasomah history and culture with the telling words, "Right Here." One line reads, "We watched Jedediah Smith destroy our houses and build rafts from the cedar planks. That was in 1828." That happened. Right Here.

On Day 2 our first visit was to Seven Devils Beach, followed by a drive along Seven Devils Road, an example of the rugged terrain Smith encountered inland from the ocean beaches. We made a brief stop on our way to Cape Arago at the South Slough Interpretive Center to observe the nearly impassible brushlands of salal, huckleberry, salmonberry, hazel, and rhododendron the expedition had faced. At the Cape Arago campsite Rogers wrote,

Marishall caught a boy about 10 years old and brought him to camp. I give him some beads and dried meat; he appears well and satisfied, and makes signs that the Inds. have all fled in their canoes and left him.

This was the Kalapuyan slave boy named Marion, who Smith later claimed was the Umpqua Indian killed less than two weeks later during the so-called Umpqua Massacre.

From Cape Arago our Rendezvous followed Smith's route to Sunset Bay. There, the expedition found good pasturage and traded for food with local natives while cutting a path through the brush and marshes separating the coast from South Slough and Coos Bay. At the Hollering Place, in present-day Empire, Rogers penned a July 9 note:

We crossed in Ind. canoes; a great many Inds. live along the river bank; there houses built after the fashion of a shed. A great many Inds. in camp with fish and berris for sale; the men bought them as fast as they brought them.



Sunset Bay.

Smith's party spent two days here, with good forage. However, they had to forge a difficult two-mile path through coastal brush and bogs to reach present-day South Slough and Coos Bay.
February 2, 2023, photo by Bob Zybach.

From the Hollering Place we traveled to the Coos History Museum where we met local historians Steve Greif, David Gould, and author Lionel Youst, who compared a story from McLeod's written journal to a local native oral history account. Youst also provided the group with an annotated index to the comprehensive research materials he has donated to the Museum for use by students, teachers, and other researchers. Lunch was served at the Seven Devils Brewery in Coos Bay.

The final stop for the day was the site of the infamous Umpqua "Massacre" and subsequent Christian burial of 11 of the men killed during that incident. Weeks before our Rendezvous, the Jedediah Smith Society had secured official Oregon Historic Cemetery recognition for this location, and we discussed an appropriate memorial.

During the Rendezvous we did not speculate about the routes taken by the survivors of the July 14 murders—Smith, Arthur Black, John Turner, and Richard Leland. Black, alone, was the first to reach Fort Vancouver safely, as Chief Factor John McLoughlin reported to HBC headquarters on August 10:

Honble. Sirs, On the 8th Inst. at 10 P.M. an American of the name of Black 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 Um[p]qua River . . .

On the following day Smith, Turner, and Leland arrived—thus, four survivors in all. McLoughlin quickly ordered McLeod to assemble a brigade, return with Smith to the scene of the attack, and retrieve as much of the Americans' livestock, furs, and other possessions as possible. Any physical punishments imposed on the perpetrators were left to McLeod's discretion.

The daily campsite and journal entries transcribed in the third and fourth Guidebooks are McLeod's. Smith, Black, Turner, and Leland accompanied him and the HBC brigade on the recovery trip back to Defeat River—as Smith had named it—and on their subsequent return to Fort Vancouver. Upon reaching the mouth of Smith River on October 28, 1828, McLeod described the stark scene:

Stoped at the entrance of the North Branch, where Mr. Smiths Party were destroyed, and a Sad Spectacle of Indian barbarity presented itself to our View, the Skeletons of eleven of those Miserabl Sufferers lying bleaching in the Sun, after paying the last Service to their remains we continued forward and made the Coast . . .



Annotated 1858 US General Land Office (GLO) subdivision map of Tsp. 21 S., Rng. 12 W., Sec. 26 by surveyor Harvey Gordon. While surveying the shoreline near the mouth of Smith River, as marked on the map, he noted: "Place where Indians murdered eleven men in the employ of Smith, Sublette & Co., about thirty years ago." Fourteen or fifteen of Smith's men were killed during the attack, but the latter number may include the Kalapuyan slave boy, Marion, who probably survived. At least eight men, including Rogers, had lived, worked, and traveled together for two years or more: John Gaiter, John Hanna, Abraham Laplante, Emmanuel Lazarus, Martin McCoy, Peter Ranne, and John Robaseu. Of these, Ranne was notable as "the first black man to enter California."

The six other men who were killed had been hired by Smith the previous July and had recently survived a massacre with him earlier in August when ten of their fellows were unexpectedly killed by local natives along the Colorado River. These survivors had then united with the other trappers in California the following month, September, and had been with them ever since: Thomas Daws, Joseph Lapointe, Toussaint Maréchal, Joseph Palmer, Charles Swift, and Thomas Virgin. These six had all started out together on July 13, 1827, and died with the others on July 14, 1828.



This sign at the intersection of Stables Road and Lower Smith River Road marks the approximate location of the "Smith massacre" as noted by surveyor Harvey Gordon in 1858.
April 3, 2023, photo by Tam Moore.

The third day of the Rendezvous began with a visit to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Elk Viewing Area along the Umpqua River a few miles east of Reedsport. About 120 horses and mules grazed here on a tidal prairie that must have been similar to the pasturage near the 1828 Smith River campsite. From there we toured the Fort Umpqua replication in Elkton, hosted by Deborah Gritton, the Education Program Coordinator for the Elkton Community Education Center. After a lunch at Arlene's Restaurant, some of our party returned to California.

From Elkton, we closely followed Smith's and McLeod's routes and campsites to the Forks of Elk Creek and Pass Creek at present-day Drain, and then the Territorial Road through Anlauf, Lorane, Crow, Veneta, Elmira, Franklin, and Cheshire to Monroe. This route was pioneered by McLeod as the HBC "pack trail" to the Umpqua in 1826 and then developed into the 1829 California Trail for HBC beaver trapping expeditions to the Sacramento Valley. It was eventually converted into the Applegate Trail wagon road in 1846 and became Oregon's first Territorial Road in 1851.

This path was a segment of the main route from the Willamette Valley through the Elk Mountain [Mountain La Biche] to the Umpqua Valley, and from the Columbia River to San Francisco until an alternate route from Pass Creek began to be favored and later evolved into today's 99-W and I-5. From Monroe to Adair Village, we took the modern route on 99-W (dating to 1852) before returning to McLeod's HBC pack trail through Tampico, Airlie, the Little Luckiamute River crossing at Bridgeport, and ending at the Dallas Best Western where we had dinner with Northwest Metis historian Rob Foxcurran, who traveled with us from that point forward.

Our final day began with a brief tour of Champoege hosted by Park Manager David Figgins. We viewed the Park's catalogued artifact collection and visited the monument to the 1843 Wolf Meeting and then stopped at the Museum of Oregon Territory in Oregon City with its spectacular views of Willamette Falls and its collection of historical documents and native artifacts. We met Jim Anderson, Virginia Jaquez, and Suzi Schoensee there and caravanned to our final destination—Fort Vancouver.



Fort Vancouver restoration by the National Park Service (NPS) as it appears today—in the same dimensions and appearance as seen by Smith while the fort was being constructed in 1828 and as painted by Warre in 1845-46. April 5, 2023, photo by Peter Meyerhof.

Our tour guide at the fort was Aaron Ochoa, a longtime National Park Service Chief of Interpretations at Fort Vancouver who had recently returned from a tour of duty to Thailand as a National Guardsman. Though this was his first day back on the job, he adeptly guided us through a history of the HBC, Fort Vancouver, and the fur trade, with visits to the fur storage warehouse, Indian trading store, blacksmith shop, and Chief Trader's kitchen. Another highlight was a presentation by Matt Dalimata, the fort's jolly and knowledgeable blacksmith.



Aaron Ochoa, Fort Vancouver Chief of Interpretations, informing us about the cannons in front of the Chief Factor's house.
April 5, 2023, photo by Bob Zybach

Our final rendezvous was dinner at the nearby Beaches Restaurant along the Columbia River. Goodbyes, thank yous—and we all went our separate ways.



The final stop at the Fort Vancouver Chief Factor's house on the way to a parting regale at The Beaches Restaurant on the Columbia River. (L-R) Rob Foxcurran, Bob Zybach, Jim Anderson, Suzi Schoensee, Aaron Ochoa, Virginia Jaquez, Eric Tschuy, and Peter Meyerhof.
April 5, 2023, photo by Matt Dalimata.

Excerpts from the 2023 Rendezvous Guidebooks

by Bob Zybach

Jedediah Smith Society April 2-5, 2023 Rendezvous The People, Foods, and Landscapes of 1828



April 2 Guidebook (1): California Redwoods
May 2 - June 22, 1828

Travels Through the Lands of Hoopa, Yurok, and Tolowa by Jedediah Smith and Harrison Roger

Jedediah Smith Society 2023 Rendezvous Guidebook #1 Table of Contents: May 26 - June 22, 1828

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Jordan Creek	June 17	19
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considerable difficulty to the beach of the ocean where I encamped. I drove the horses across a small creek where there was some grass. The horses lost the day before were found and brought up. 3 of my men quite sick.

ROGERS: THURSDAY, JUNE 12TH. All hands up early and ready for a start, directing our course W. about 2 miles and struck a small creek, where there was some grass on the mountain for our horses, and enc. for the day, the traveling very bad. The horses that was left yesterday, was found to-day, and brought to camp. The day clear; some fog in the morning.

Endert Beach (June 13, 1828)

SMITH: June 13th North N West along a ridge in places rough with thickets and rocks. At night descending to and encamping on the shore where there was but little grass. In the course of the day 3 Mules gave out and were left one load was lost and one [] horse was disabled by falling down a ledge of rocks.

ROGERS: FRIDAY, JUNE 13TH, 1828. We made an early start again this morning, steering N.W., about 6 m., and struck the ocean and enc. on the beach. Plenty of grass on the mountain for our horses, but very steep for them to climb after it. The traveling very mountainous; some brush as yesterday. 2 mules left today that give out and could not travel; one young horse fell down a point of mou. and killed himself. The day clear and pleasant.

Cushing Creek (June 14, 1828)

SMITH: June 14th North 1 Mile. It being low tide by passing around a point in the water I was enabled to travel along the shore and encamped in a prairie of about 100 acres of tolerable grass. In the vicinity was a plenty of Elk sign. The prospect ahead was somewhat flattering and I was in hope that we had passed all the mountains. Some men sent back for the purpose found the lost load and brought up the fatigued mules.

ROGERS: SATURDAY, JUNE 14TH, 1828. We made an early start again this morning, directing our course along the sea shore N., about 1 mile, and struck a low neck of land running into the sea, where there was plenty of clover and grass for our horse, and enc. for the day. We travelled in the water of the ocean 3 or 4 hundred yards, when the swells some times would be as high as the horses backs. 2 men sent back after a load of fur that was losted yesterday, and to look after horses. 2 hunters dispatched after elk as soon as we enc. One fat deer killed yesterday by J. Hanna. Seven or 8 Inds. came to camp; Capt. Smith give them some beads. The hunters returned without killing any game; saw plenty of elk sign. The day clear and windy.

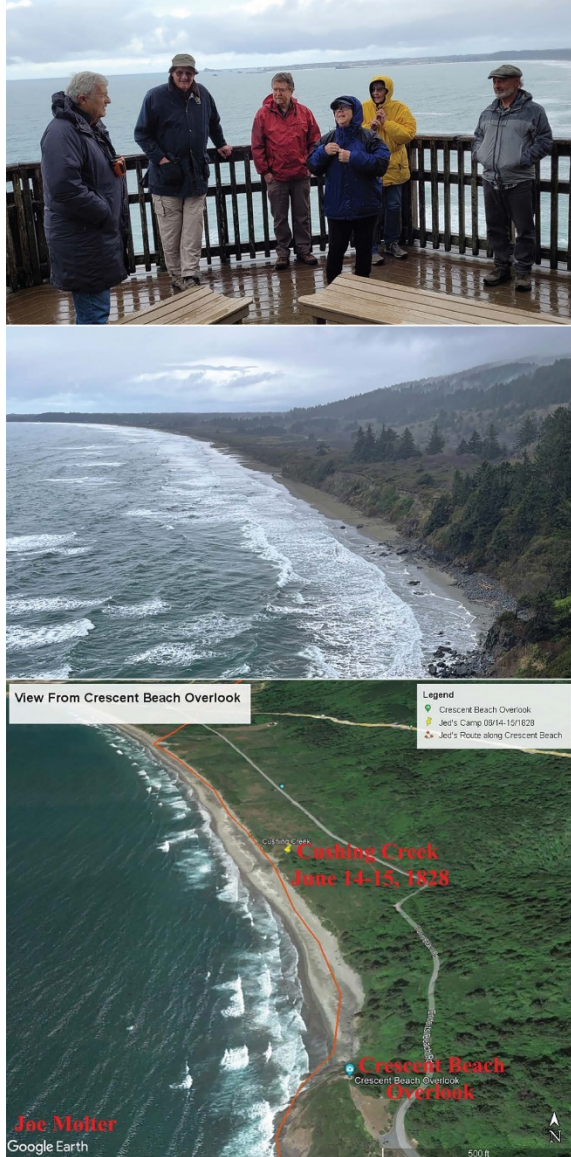
SMITH: June 15th I lay by to recruit my horses. Several of us went hunting and Joseph Lapoint in the morning killed one of the largest [] Elk I had ever seen. He was not very fat but [] tolerable [] good meat. His size induced me to weigh the meat which I found to weigh 695 lbs neat weight exclusive of the tongue and some other small pieces which would have made it above 700 lbs.

Guidebook Instructions

The four 2023 Rendezvous Guidebooks were designed for JSS members, students, researchers, and others with an interest in local history and places. These two pages illustrate how the guidebooks were used during the Rendezvous at the first stop: the Crescent Beach Overlook viewing the modern location and landscape of Smith's April 14, 1828, campsite near the mouth of Cushing Creek.

Facing Page: (upper left) This is the cover of Guidebook #1, featuring a reproduction of Paul Calles 1987 painting, *In the Land of Giants*. Smith and others probably viewed the redwoods, but it is unlikely they brought pack teams or horses into them because of surface obstructions and lack of browse. (upper right) A GIS map created by Vyla Grindberg, based on research by Joe Molter and Bob Zybach, showing Cushing Creek campsite in relation to Smith's travel route. (lower left) The Table of Contents showing 1828 dates of named and mapped campsites and the page in the guidebook in which Smith's and Rogers' transcribed journal entries for that day can be found. (lower right) Cushing Creek campsite transcribed journal entries.

This Page: (top) Crescent Beach Overlook with (L-R) Milton von Damm, Arthur Hurley, Peter Meyerhof, Suzi Schoensee, Virginia Jaquez, and Richard Cimino. Photo April 2, 2023, by Tam Moore. (center) View of Cushing Creek campsite from Crescent Beach Overlook. April 2, 2023, photo by Peter Meyerhof. (bottom) Map of Smith route to and from the Cushing Creek campsite by Joe Molter.



*Guidebook copies will be available on the JSS website as soon as renovations to the site are complete.

James Ahrens was president of the Montana Hospital Association and also chair of the National Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee. After retirement from the MHA, he started a consulting company that served several health-care organizations. In 2017 he and his wife Kathleen moved to Bakersfield, California, where Ahrens remains active in community and Kern County activities, including the Kern River Fly Fishers. He is a member the Jedediah Smith Society Board.

The Jedediah Smith Bakersfield Monument

by James Ahrens

A few years ago, the Jedediah Smith Society Board decided the time had come to erect a new Jed Smith monument near Bakersfield, California.

The original monument, installed in 1959, was in disrepair and unsightly. The copper or brass plate attached to the rock-like tribute to Jed had been stolen many years earlier, probably in about 1977, according to monument expert Raymund Wood.

Placed along the Edison Highway at the edge of an orchard eleven miles east of Bakersfield, the old monument may have been noticed by farmers, locals, and drivers of refuse trucks, but seldom by the site-seeing public. Those who did happen to pass nearby must have scratched their heads, confused about the purpose of this isolated stone.



Research by society members and others who shared an interest in honoring Jed revealed that the monument was not even placed accurately. Jed had likely crossed the Kern River in the Panorama Bluffs area; thus, the old monument was misplaced by several miles.

Something had to be done.

The Jed Smith board realized that decommissioning and replacing the original monument would require a major effort and expenditure. Nevertheless, several society members rose to the challenge, and a new monument was dedicated on January 17, 2023.

The monument is now located closer to Bakersfield at the intersection of Loma Linda and Panorama Drives, with Bakersfield College to the southeast.



JEDEDIAH STRONG SMITH

1799 – 1831

Fur Trader – Trail Blazer – Map Maker

Jedediah Smith and fourteen men from the Smith, Jackson and Sublette fur trading partnership camped near here along the Kern River about February 10, 1827, on their way, North, up the San Joaquin Valley to explore non-Mexican inhabited areas and access areas with beaver. They were the first Americans to reach California by land. Smith and two of his men then became the first to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains and travel across the great basin of Nevada to the Great Salt Lake area. He then returned to California and led his men, North, up the Sacramento Valley into Oregon Territory in 1828. The Northern California Indians had never seen horses or white men according to Smith's journal. Smith's extensive far Western explorations opened the door for early map makers.

Dedicated 2022

By the Jedediah Smith Society

Incorporated 1957 at U.O.P. Stockton, CA

How this new monument came to fruition is a story of hard work and persistence—and it's a story I'm proud to share.

Jim Smith, former JSS president and former mayor of Helena, Montana, knew I visited Bakersfield occasionally. Jim and I had collaborated in Helena on legislative issues. Anyway, Jim gave me a photo of the original monument and suggested I visit the site. Dutifully, I said, "OK," but two years or so passed before I honored his request. Perhaps the reason for my delay was that I hadn't even heard of Jed Smith, and I didn't have time, then, to read anything about him. A few years later, my wife and I moved permanently to Bakersfield because we have family in the area. After further conversations with Jim and current JSS president Milton von Damm, I started to work.

Obtaining funds for a new monument was one of our first priorities. Society member and Bakersfield resident Theresa Melbar provided the impetus for the monument with a generous donation of \$2,000. The remainder came from the JSS board, which initially envisioned a \$5,000 expenditure.

I also had to obtain local government approval for relocating the monument. In the beginning, I thought the proposed site would be within Bakersfield. However, after a little research, I realized the site was not within Bakersfield proper but within the larger jurisdiction of Kern County.

Fortunately, I had worked on another local project with Kern County Board of Supervisors member Mike Maggard, and our relationship proved to be very helpful because the proposed site was in his county district. Maggard determined

that if the Kern County Parks and Recreation Committee approved the project, it would not be necessary to seek approval from the County Board.

We wondered whether the county would require approval by a structural engineer. This step, if necessary, would have meant an additional expenditure for which we had not planned. I discovered, though, that we did not need to involve an engineer.

The Parks and Recreation Committee unanimously approved our project on August 18, 2021.

In the meantime, Bill Horst, a local historian and artist, contacted David Williams of the Williams Monument Company. Horst would design the monument and do the artwork; Williams would order the stone and engrave it. To keep the costs as close to budget as possible, we ordered the granite from an overseas supplier. Unfortunately, delivery was delayed for months because a supply chain debacle was hindering all overseas shipments. Some twenty months later the granite arrived, and the price fit within our budget.

Williams engraved the stone and then poured the concrete base, which took over two weeks to cure. The next hurdle was to transport the engraved monument from the town of Arvin, deliver it to the Panorama Hills site, and cement it to the base. Matching holes had to be drilled into the base of the granite monument and into the cement base so that the rebar anchor rods could be precisely inserted into both. This drilling could be completed only when the monument was ready to be placed on its cement base.

The next obstacle was lifting the monument onto and off a delivery truck. Williams attempted to contract with a few crane-rental firms, but the cost was prohibitive. He then decided that he himself would move the engraved monument from Arvin to the site, some thirty miles away. Removing the 3,200-pound slab of granite from the truck bed presented a formidable challenge, but by using a forklift, Williams eventually succeeded.

Milton von Damm, Bill Horst, David Williams, newly elected District Supervisor Jeff Flores, other county staff, and I attended the dedication ceremony. After the ceremonial ribbon cutting, von Damm and Flores spoke briefly. Flores, who had been involved in this project from the beginning, said, “It feels good to be here and see this project through. The wider public can now come and read this and learn about history.”

Each day hundreds of walkers, runners, and cyclists pass by the newly dedicated monument. Some even stop long enough to read the inscription.

And so, Jed Smith’s extraordinary journey continues.



Photo by John Donegan, *Bakersfield.com*, January 17, 2023

*To see local coverage of the monument dedication, please click on these links: <https://www.kget.com/news/local-news/jedediah-smith-early-19th-century-explorer-gets-his-kern-county-due/> and [Kern unveils Jedediah Smith memorial at Panorama Park | News | bakersfield.com](https://www.bakersfield.com/news/kern-unveils-jedediah-smith-memorial-at-panorama-park).

William G. White was born in La Junta, Colorado, not far upstream from Bent's Old Fort, and grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico. After four years of military service during the Cold War era, he completed a BA in Anthropology at California State University and an MA at the University of Nevada, specializing in Historical Archaeology. Mr. White was employed as an archaeologist for more than thirty years with various cultural resource management firms and federal agencies in the West. Now retired, he continues to work parttime as a consultant in archaeology and history. He especially enjoys the "chase" in historical research.

A Matter of Timing: George Simpson and Jedediah Smith

by William G. White

Two important questions emerge in relation to Jedediah Smith's affairs in far western Oregon Country. First, when did Hudson's Bay Company Governor George Simpson know that American fur trappers were present in Fort Colville's upper northeastern trade region in the winter of 1828-29? Second, when did Smith decide on which of many options he would pursue to extricate himself from HBC-dominated Oregon Country and return east to reunite with business partners trapping and trading in the Rocky Mountains?



George Simpson

(Image based on an 1872 daguerreotype reproduced in John S. Galbraith, *The Little Emperor: Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976.)

Initial Timeline

Out of a trapping and trading brigade comprised of nineteen men and one Indian lad, Smith, John Turner, Richard Leland (Layland), and Arthur Black were the only survivors of a treacherous morning attack by the Kelawatset (Kuitsh) Indians on the lower Umpqua River in mid-July 1828. The four survivors arrived at Fort Vancouver in early August. Smith and his three men then accompanied HBC Chief Trader Alexander McLeod and trappers of the first California-bound Southern Expedition back to the Umpqua to recover looted property and ascertain the fate of Smith's fallen brigade. While Smith and McLeod were attempting to recover property, Governor Simpson—then on his second inspection tour of the larger Columbia District—arrived at Fort Vancouver on the night of 25 October. Three days later, McLeod and Smith reached the Umpqua massacre site and subsequently located and buried the dead. During this period the employment contracts of Smith's three surviving brigade members expired, and only Black chose to continue working for Smith. After a less-than-successful repossession of horses and property, Smith and McLeod returned to Fort Vancouver on 14 December. During the last week of December, Simpson negotiated a generous business settlement to purchase Smith's reclaimed property.¹

When Did Simpson Know?

In the days following his arrival at Fort Vancouver, Chief Factor John McLoughlin no doubt briefed Simpson about the state of HBC business in the Columbia District. One of Simpson's concerns was Flathead and Kutenai Indian territory, serviced by the Flathead and Kootenay Posts in the far northeastern trade domain of the Fort Colville district. American trapping parties had repeatedly penetrated this region since the time Smith had accompanied the HBC Snake Country brigade's return to the Flathead Post in 1824.² According to a letter dated 21 October 1828, John Work, the clerk at Fort Colville, informed Simpson that "we were too late for the Summer trade of the upper posts, the Flatheads and greater part of the Koatanies [Kutenai] had left the trading rendezvous" because the resupply brigade was delayed in delivering trade goods. Work makes no mention of the presence of either freemen (those HBC trappers who had deserted Ogden's 1825 Snake Country expedition) or American trappers who were likely laboring in the region by October. Simpson was apprehensive, however, and declared that the "Flat Head Post requires superior management in its present state." Simpson apparently knew, or at least suspected, that freemen were present when he stated that they had "to be skillfully dealt with" if they were to be to be lured away from American influence and back into HBC service.³ Simpson makes no reference to American trappers in his November response to Work.

The two distant posts were not manned year-round but only during extended periods in conjunction with semiannual trade fairs with local indigenous populations. To commence the winter rendezvous, Chief Trader John Dease and Clerk William Kittson departed Fort Colville on 12 November. Dease reached the Flathead Post sixteen days later; Kittson had separated earlier, destined for the Kootenay. In his correspondence Dease states that he initially found a band of the "Pend Oreille" and "some Freeman" at the Flathead Post, but that on 3 December "the Flatheads arrived with about 40 Americans and Freeman among whom were the following traders, one Major [Joshua] Pilcher, [Johnson] Gardner [Pilcher's clerk], [David] Jackson, and Fitz Patrick [Thomas Fitzpatrick, Jackson's clerk]."⁴ Six weeks later Dease again corresponds with Simpson, stating that "nothing out of the ordinary routine in Trade has transpired since my last to you in December." This statement suggests that Dease dispatched his 7 December letter by messenger following his signature, and his missive probably reached Fort Vancouver sometime in the first half of January 1829, prior to his second letter.⁵

Dease's letter dated 17 January is certainly an understatement, for he reports "nothing out of the ordinary." He tells Simpson that Pilcher "appears desirous of entering this [the HBC] service" but adds that he advised Pilcher that he "had no authority to make any arrangements of the nature." In response, Pilcher wrote Simpson directly, outlining his proposed offer to trap American territory directly for the HBC. Obviously made aware of Smith's presence at Fort Vancouver through conversation with Dease, Jackson availed himself of an opportunity to pen an open letter to Smith. Work received the three-letter dispatch at Fort Colville on 28 January and immediately forwarded it the next day "without delay."⁶

Writing from Fort Vancouver on 17 February 1829, Simpson responded to Dease: "I am favored with your communication of 7th December & 17th January and hope this will reach you before your departure from the Flat Head Post" in late March. Included in the dispatch was also a reply to Pilcher and probably one to Jackson (although no copy of Simpson's response to Jackson has been located). John Work, at Fort Colville, acknowledged receipt of the return packet in a letter addressed to Simpson and dated 1 March.⁷

Informed, perhaps, by the unofficial "moccasin telegraph," Simpson and McLoughlin suspected or marginally knew that former HBC freemen and Americans were trapping and trading in the Flathead and Kutenai Indian territory by October-November 1828. Official correspondence from Chief Trader Dease made it abundantly clear that forty Americans under the separate leadership of Pilcher and Jackson were operating in the region by December. This incursion into HBC domain was reasserted in January 1829 correspondence and acknowledged by Simpson in reply to Dease in early February.

When Did Smith Decide?

Upon Smith's return to Fort Vancouver from the lower Umpqua region, he and Black enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the HBC and sojourned at the fort through the winter months of 1828-29. Though hardly a serious threat to HBC's monopoly, Smith and his distant business partners were nevertheless rival competitors whose activity affected the HBC's annual Snake Country endeavors. As such, Simpson and McLoughlin had endless questions to ask Smith, amicably carried out openly during or after shared meals or in private conferences. Simpson, always protective of HBC interests and accustomed to getting his way, eventually reached an "understanding or Settlement on all matters

related to business” with Smith through written “instead of Verbal” communications on 26 and again on 29 December 1828.⁸

Although Simpson felt the Americans, at least those trapping in the Flathead area, “are on their last legs” and “appear to be in distress,” he was particularly interested in Smith’s plans. Smith initially said that he intended to gather up whichever furs had been recovered from the Umpqua disaster and deliver them to Fort Nez Percés, located along the middle section of the Columbia River. He also wanted thirty-eight horses from Nez Percés in exchange for an equal number recovered in the Umpqua region and retained by the HBC’s Southern Expedition. With horses and furs temporarily held at the fort, Smith would then proceed east back to the Salt Lake region “whence [he] would in the course of next Summer send for both.”⁹

Having outlined the “heavy loss” incurred by the HBC in the recovery of Smith’s property, Simpson suggested that the HBC would not assist Smith on his proposed upriver trip as he laid it out: “I now beg to state,” Simpson wrote, “that we should consider it the height of imprudence in you to attempt going up the Columbia with only your two [one] followers either light or with property . . . such a measure on your part would therefore in our opinion be sporting with Life or courting danger to madness.” Traveling overland from Fort Nez Percés in the dead of winter was “equally imprudent,” said Simpson. He reasoned that Smith was unfamiliar with the landscape, subject to “roving War parties,” inexperienced in “Snow Shoe Travel,” and in “danger of Starvation as it is impossible you can carry provisions such a distance.”¹⁰

Simpson later asserted to the HBC’s ruling committee that Smith’s anticipated “undertaking appeared to me so hazardous, that I remonstrated against it.” Suspecting or knowing that Americans were present in the Flathead and Kutenai region by the end of December, it is reasonable to infer that Simpson desired to remove Smith, at least temporarily, from direct participation in the management and field operations of an opposing business. Simpson was quick to offer two departure options. “If agreeable,” Simpson tendered, “you shall be allowed a passage free of expense to Red River Settlement with me in the course of next Spring & Summer from whence you can proceed to St. Louis.” As an alternative, Smith would be allowed to “accompany our Snake Country Expedition next Autumn by which means you will in all probability have a safe escort until you fall in with your people at . . . Salt Lake.”¹¹

Smith considered the possibilities and at first elected to travel with Simpson; Simpson’s treks were legendary achievements, consistently traveling light and fast wherever he ventured within the HBC’s sprawling sphere of dominance. “I am exceedingly happy that you have . . . allowed yourself to be influenced by my advice to pursue the safer yet more circuitous route by Red River,” responded Simpson. The Governor left Fort Vancouver on 25 March 1829 and subsequently reached the Red River Settlement on 29 May. If Smith had joined Simpson to the settlement, he would have turned south and likely reached St. Louis by early July, far from the Rocky Mountains. In contrast, Peter Skene Ogden departed Fort Vancouver in August for Fort Nez Percés and did not begin the 1829-1830 Snake Country expedition from that location until late October; thus, he would have further delayed Smith’s departure.¹²

The evidence reveals that Simpson was privy to information regarding the northeast corner of Fort Colville’s district, information he and McLoughlin were no doubt hesitant to share with Smith. However, when Dease’s mail packet containing Jackson’s open letter arrived at Fort Vancouver in February, Simpson and McLoughlin could no longer conceal the facts. Now aware that Jackson was trapping in the Flathead region and frustrating Simpson’s recommendation to travel with him, Smith and Black chose to accompany the east-bound York Factory Express up the Columbia River. Smith and Black departed the depot with the Express on 12 March 1829, nearly two weeks prior to Simpson’s departure. They traveled with the Columbia boats as far as Fort Colville, reaching that location on or about 4 April. Traversing overland from Colville, the pair then reunited with business partner David Jackson and his brigade, trapping the Flathead and Kutenai Indian territory in May. Smith and Jackson later rejoined partner William Sublette for rendezvous at Pierre’s Hole (Teton Valley) in August.¹³

Smith would never again trap west of the Continental Divide.

Notes

1. See E. E. Rich, ed., *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee*, First Series, 1825-1838 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1941), 68-70; Maurice S. Sullivan, *The Travels of Jedediah Smith: A Documentary Outline, Including His Journal* (Santa Ana: Fine Arts Press, 1934), 109-112, 128, 133, 135; E. E. Rich, ed., *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson Esqr. Governor of Ruperts Land, to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company London, March 1, 1829. Continued and Completed, March 24 and June 5, 1829*. Hudson’s Bay Company Series 10 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), 46-47; Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA), *Simpson Inward Correspondence 1828-1829*, D/4/122: 13-15; Burt Barker, *Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin Written at Fort Vancouver 1829-1832* (Portland: Binford and Mort for the Oregon Historical Society, 1948), 1-5, 78;

- Frederick Merk, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire, George Simpson's Journal* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1968), 299, 302-307; Joel V. Berreman, *Tribal Distribution in Oregon*, *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, no. 47 (1937): 36-37.
2. T. C. Elliot, "Journal of Alexander Ross—Snake Country Expedition, 1824," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 14, no. 4 (Dec. 1913): 366-386.
 3. HBCA, *Simpson Inward Correspondence*: 1; Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 301-302; HBCA, *Simpson General Outward Correspondence* 1828-29, D/4/16: 15-17.
 4. HBCA, *Simpson Inward Correspondence*: 13-15; John E. Sunder, *Joshua Pilcher: Fur Trader and Indian Agent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 70-72.
 5. HBCA, *Simpson Inward Correspondence*: 34-36.
 6. HBCA, *Simpson Inward Correspondence*: 35-36, 39. For Simpson's response to Pilcher's offer, see Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 307-308.
 7. HBCA, *Simpson General Outward Correspondence*, D/4/16: 38-41; for a copy of this letter see John C. Jackson, *Shadow on the Tetons: David E. Jackson and the Claiming of the West* (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1993), 146-147. For a copy of the response letter to Pilcher, see Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 307-308. Correspondence by Jackson to Smith and a reply from Simpson have not been identified at the HBCA; HBCA, *Simpson General Outward Correspondence*: 60-61.
 8. HBCA, *Simpson General Outward Correspondence*: 23-25, 30-31. For copies of these two letters, see Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 302-307.
 9. HBCA, *Simpson General Outward Correspondence*: 38-41; Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 304.
 10. Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 304-305.
 11. Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 62; Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 305-306.
 12. Peter C. Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness* (Ontario: Penguin Books Canada, 1987) 229-230; Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 306; Rich, *Part of the Dispatch from George Simpson*, xlv; John Scaglione, ed., "Ogden's Report of His 1829-1830 Expedition," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 28, no. 2 (June 1949): 117-124.
 13. James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: The Fraser-Columbia Brigade System, 1811-47*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 30; Royal British Columbia Archives, *Correspondence of William Todd to Edward Ermatinger*, PR-0947, B/4/16:15-17; William G. White, "Jedediah Smith Outward Bound Via the Columbia River," *Castor Canadensis*, 1, no. 1 (Fall 2022): 2-7; Fred R. Gowans, *Rock Mountain Rendezvous: A History of the Fur Trade Rendezvous, 1825-1840*, (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).



Artist rendition of Fort Colville looking southwest and overlooking the upper Columbia River, ca. 1845
(Courtesy National Park Service, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area)

Meet Milton von Damm, Jedediah Smith Society President



Eight years ago, Milton von Damm joined the Jedediah Smith Society, serving as secretary-treasurer for six years and currently, he says, as “an elderly transitional president.” Collaborating with JSS members he refers to as “a dedicated and productive cast,” Milton has helped our society to reorganize the board of directors, revise bylaws, produce a quarterly newsletter and a semiannual journal, publish a book-length Jed Smith bibliography, hold a spring rendezvous, solicit donations for an Endowment Fund, and begin the process of improving our website and interactive maps.

More than anything, he has brought renewed energy and a spirit of cooperation to the JSS.

Milton’s abiding interest in the history of the American West began some forty years ago with his quest to acquire fur trade arms and artifacts. He succeeded, and then some! His extensive collection eventually became the subject of *The Fur Trade: A History of Arms and Trade Goods*, published in 2013. The book contains over 400 photos of guns, knives, kettles, beads, and blankets used by fur traders in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.



Milton has also written articles about the West for *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly*, *Castor Canadensis*, and the *Kentucky Rifle Association Bulletin*, and he sits on the board of the American Society of Arms Collectors.

We all have our favorite fur trade books; Milton’s include two by Dale Morgan, *The West of William Ashley 1822-1838* and *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, any of Francis Parkman’s histories, and Richard Dillon’s *The Siskiyou Trail*.

Western Americana is Milton’s passion—a passion that complements his long and storied career of service to education and government. And, in a curious way, the seed of his commitment to public

service may have been planted many years ago when he attended San Jose State College.

On December 17, 1958, the college newspaper, *Spartan Daily*, reported that a young Milton, in his first act as prosecuting attorney for the Student Activities Board, filed charges against a freshman girl for “failing to remove her campaign posters by the Friday deadline.” Even seniors were not immune from the audacious Milton, who accused them of placing movie posters “in places not provided for,” including the front of the college bookstore. Apparently, Milton took his job seriously!

Far more substantial issues lay ahead.

As any student of history knows, the monumental 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* promised to end decades of *de jure* segregation in public schools. However, the brutal murder of Emmett Till, the brave protest by Rosa Parks, the difficult integration of Little Rock High School—these and many other events in the late '50s demonstrated that racial prejudice persisted in America.

The troubling reality of racism did not go unnoticed by Milton, who discovered that San Jose State fraternities required prospective members to take oaths that overtly declared the superiority of “whites” and “Christians.” In an effort to mitigate racial and religious discrimination, Milton arranged campus-wide meetings, believing that discussing the problem would encourage greater understanding and tolerance.

A Fellowship in Public Affairs from the Coro Foundation followed Milton’s graduation and taught him about public life, local government, corporations, labor unions, the Legal Aid Society, and political campaigning. He credits a 1960 field trip to the California State Legislature for leading to his first post-college employment—as a financial analyst in the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office, located in the state capitol. In this role Milton periodically attended meetings of the Regents of the University of California, with Governor Jerry Brown presiding.

In 1966 the Office of the President of the University of California offered Milton a position as Director of Budgetary Relations, an offer he calls “an important milestone” in his professional life. In this capacity he helped to acquire funding for the university system’s various campuses. Milton was dedicated to his work, but he also enjoyed backpacking, golfing, duck hunting, skiing, and fly fishing.

An especially auspicious event took place in 1972 when Milton married his wife Carolyn. The couple recently celebrated their fiftieth anniversary. They have three children. Son Matthew is a computer science engineer with Qualcomm; son David a retired Coast Guard Commander and now Director of Safety and Security for Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Daughter Emily moved to Edinburgh, Scotland, married a college professor, and is still there, raising a family and studying horticulture. The von Damms also enjoy eight grandchildren.



Although Milton liked his job with the University of California, after thirteen years he became “restless,” he says, and in 1979 he decided to make a “fundamental career change” by pursuing self-employment and playing a more active role in the Berkeley community. The von Damms soon expanded their rental housing investments, purchased three coin-operated laundries, and the always active Milton even served a term as president of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. Milton and Carolyn continue to live in Berkeley, in a small penthouse in their remaining apartment building.

The Jedediah Smith Society was organized some 66 years ago with the avowed purpose of studying western exploration and development prior to the Gold Rush period. Central to that purpose, of course, is Jedediah Strong Smith and the fur trade. Milton von Damm honors this purpose: his hard work, leadership, and service help to ensure that our society will flourish for many years to come.

Jed Smith in the Schools, 1926 and Beyond

On August 29, 1926, Noel Breed published a brief article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* declaring that Jed Smith had been the “victim of a strange forgetfulness.” To accord Jed the attention he deserved, Breed summarized Jed’s life and enumerated a few of his important achievements. Because he was writing mainly for California readers, Breed singled out one accomplishment: “[Jed’s] greatest distinction, of course, is that he discovered the overland route to California and marked the trail that was so well worn by 1848 that California would have come into the Union had there been no Mexican War.”¹

Impressed by Breed’s article, Will C. Wood, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the California Department of Education, reprinted Breed’s article for superintendents, principals, and teachers so that they and their students could, on November 27, 1926, “celebrate the 100th anniversary of the coming of Jedediah Smith to this state.” Wood declared that “every citizen of California and particularly every teacher and pupil should know the story of Jedediah Smith.”² We could not ascertain if Superintendent Wood’s directive was ever implemented or, if it were, for how long. However, the story continues many years later . . .

On April 7, 1962, the Jedediah Smith Society unanimously adopted a resolution stating that “educators throughout the State be requested to instruct their pupils and students as to the importance of the part played by Jedediah Strong Smith, who, because of his bravery, his keen intellect, his uprightness of character, his loyalty and tenacity of purpose, opened the West so that it later became a part of our great country.”³ A committee was formed to effect the resolution, but, again, we do not know if their efforts succeeded.

Along comes revisionist history—a phrase which has of late been given a pejorative connotation but which, in a positive light, merely means that the study of history is “a dialogue between the present and the past.” As new or previously overlooked evidence emerges, historians sometimes alter their perspectives. Eminent Civil War scholar James McPherson puts the case for revisionism this way: “There is no single, eternal, and immutable ‘truth’ about past events and their meaning.”⁴

In 2009 Barton Barbour (and several other scholars, both before and after) moved Jed’s history away from a one-sided, exclusively positive view. Barbour argues that Jed’s status as mythic or romantic hero is called in question by evidence that “his behavior was by no means universally saintly.” Barbour thus humanizes Jed—showing that he was “a man of his time,” an amalgam of “steadiness, wisdom, and intelligence” but not beyond “duplicity and deception” or even bigotry.⁵

As teachers present Jed’s story to their students—and they should—they must be mindful, as Barbour is, of Jed’s remarkable achievements *and* of his imperfections.

¹ Breed, Noel. Rpt. in “The Story of Jedediah Smith Who Blazed the Overland Trail to California.” Pamphlet, introduction by Will C. Wood, California State Printing Office, 1926, p. 2. HathiTrust Digital Library, babel.hathitrust.org/.

² Wood, Will C. Introduction to Breed.

³ Qtd. in Stuart, Grace D. “Jedediah Smith Day.” *The Pacific Historian*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 1962, pp. 84-85.

⁴ McPherson, James. “Revisionist Historians.” *Perspectives on History*, American Historical Association, Sept. 1, 2003. www.historians.org.

⁵ Barbour, Barton H. *Jedediah Smith: No Ordinary Mountain Man*. U of Oklahoma P, 2009, pp. 264-265.

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JSS Website Renovations

Our site, located at <http://jedediahsmithsociety.org/>, is undergoing a major renovation and will soon be an even better source of information about Jed and the fur trade.

Selected Fur Trade Organizations and Places of Interest to Readers

American Mountain Men (AMM): <https://americanmountainmen.org/>
Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba: <http://gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/>
Museum of the Fur Trade, Chadron, Nebraska: www.furtrade.org
Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming: www.museumofthemountainman.com
Oregon-California Trails Association: [Discover and Join OCTA - OCTA \(octa-trails.org\)](http://DiscoverandJoinOCTA-OCTA(octa-trails.org))
The [Robert] Campbell House and Museum, St. Louis, Missouri: www.campbellhousemuseum.org
The Bancroft Library, University of California-Berkeley Campus: www.lib.berkeley.edu
University of the Pacific, Holt-Atherton Special Collections—Digital Archives: <http://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu>

Coming Events (See URLs above.)

- OCTA will hold its annual convention on July 25-29, 2023, in Gering, Nebraska. A highlight of this gathering will be the induction of Jed Smith into OCTA's Hall of Fame.
- The Museum of the Mountain Man will sponsor the Green River Rendezvous from July 6-9, 2023.
- The 2024 National Fur Trade Symposium will be held on Sept. 12-15 in Pinedale, Wyoming, at the home of the Museum of Mountain Man. Titled "1824, The Eve of the Rendezvous," the symposium will celebrate Jed's entry into the Green River Valley, followed, a year later, by the first rendezvous.
- During Fur Trade Days on July 12-16, the Museum of the Fur Trade in Chadron, Nebraska, presents a Fur Trade Flag Ceremony describing all the countries and companies that have been involved in the North American fur trade. The event also includes the museum's entry in the parade on the Saturday morning during the event.
- On August 22-28, 2023, the South Dakota communities of Lemmon and Shadehill will hold a Hugh Glass Rendezvous to celebrate the bicentennial of Hugh's arrival near the Grand River. See [Hugh Glass Rendezvous - Home | Facebook](#)

The Editors' Corner . . .

We are grateful to Bob Zybach, Jim Ahrens, and William White for sharing their experiences and their insights in this issue. They are valued members of the JSS.

In preparation for the recent traveling Rendezvous from Crescent City, California, to Fort Vancouver, Mr. Zybach graciously prepared four guidebooks complete with detailed descriptions of the sites visited, maps, and photos. These guidebooks are invaluable resources for anyone interested in learning more about Jed's trails. Our readers may also be interested in Dale L. Morgan and Carl I. Wheat's 1954 *Jedediah Smith and His Maps of the American West*. This very rare and seminal text is *the* starting place for studying Jed's influence on later mapmakers.

Mr. Ahrens and others worked hard to complete the Bakersfield Monument project. Such monuments are powerful visual reminders of Jed Smith's important role in our nation's history. In 1999 Raymund Wood published *Jedediah Smith and His Monuments*, which contains photos and descriptions of 66 monuments in eight states. Your editors wonder if the time is right for a revised edition of Wood's book. Is anyone up to this challenging task?

Mr. White's article, a companion-piece to his recent "Jedediah Smith Outbound Via the Columbia River, 1829," documents Jed's relationship with HBC Governor George Simpson and thus reminds us that Jed's expeditions had significant political implications. Readers wishing to learn more about Jed's pervasive influence may wish to read Nancy J. Taniguchi's "Jed Smith, U.S. Trade and Global Connections," *Southern California Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (Winter 2006-2007): 389-407.

Forthcoming in the fall issue of *Castor* is an essay on Jed's travels in California and Oregon, and another paper on his first Southwest Expedition. We look forward to sharing these articles, and we hope that other amateur or professional historians will also consider contributing to *Castor*.

Joe Green and Marlene Smith-Baranzini

Publishing in *Castor Canadensis*

We welcome articles on topics related to Jed: his historical, geographical, religious, economic, or political milieu; and his interactions with others, including the indigenous people, the HBC, and Mexican Californians.

Please follow these guidelines:

- Authors should submit articles by email at any convenient time in MS Word as *pdf* attachments to Joe Green, editor, GChaucer1950@yahoo.com. Home phone: 308.832.2256.
- We prefer articles of no more than 4,000 words, but we will do our best to accommodate exceptions to this guideline.
- End notes should be numbered consecutively. (No footnotes, please.) You may format citations in any appropriate academic style (MLA or Chicago preferred).
- Photographs, maps, illustrations, or other images should be sent as separate attachments and not embedded in the article. They should be sent as *jpg* or *pdf* in the highest resolution possible and numbered in the text (e.g., Fig. 1). A separate attachment, with the relevant Fig. No., should contain a short title or description of the image.
- We prefer articles that have not been previously published.
- Two or more readers will evaluate each submission. Once the editor and other readers complete a review, we will notify the author of the article's status. If we agree to publish, we will communicate with the author about any revisions and about the approximate date of publication.

Dues

If you have not already submitted your 2023 dues, please send them to Arthur Hurley, Treasurer, 1230 Olive Hill Lane, Napa, CA 94558. Keep in mind our new dues categories:

Student (remains the same at \$10.00)

David Jackson: \$50.00

William Sublette: \$75.00

Jedediah Smith: \$150.00

New Members

New members help us to remain a viable and active organization. If you know of anyone who might like to join us, please share this form.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email address if available: _____
*Optional: Please tell us your area(s) of interest: _____

*Mail your check for dues made out to the Jedediah Smith Society and this form to Arthur Hurley, Treasurer, 1230 Olive Hill Lane, Napa, CA 94558.

**The JSS publishes a quarterly newsletter and a semiannual journal, *Castor Canadensis*. To save on printing costs, we use email to distribute our newsletter. If you do not have an email, we will use the US mail. We distribute *Castor* by regular US mail.

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