



# CASTOR CANADENSIS

Newsletter of the Jedediah Smith Society • University of the Pacific, Stockton, California

WINTER 2015

Remember: Dues are due this month.

## Jedediah Smith and the Brig *Owhyhee* at Fort Vancouver

By JIM HARDEE

*Jim Hardee is Editor of the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal published by the Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming. Jim was also past president of the Jedediah Smith Society. He will be our keynote speaker for the 60th Anniversary Rendezvous Celebration October 8, 2016.*

As Director of the Fur Trade Research Center, requests for research assistance are frequent. Occasionally, new, previously unknown tidbits of information regarding the fur trade surface. One such recent inquiry regarding a letter written by Levi Young on June 10, 1829, provides fresh information regarding Jedediah S. Smith.<sup>1</sup>

Having left Boston as a crewman on the Brig *Owhyhee*, Young wrote to his fiancée, Jane Daulphin, from aboard ship while anchored at Queen Charlotte's Island on the Pacific Coast of British Columbia. Young married his sweetheart a few years after his return from a more than 2 ½ year voyage of trade in the Pacific Northwest. In his letter, Young made several references to events that are verifiable in the historical record.

Of particular interest, Young related to his beloved that, "a Mr. Smith, an American gentleman, lost a no. of men and considerable property to the south of this. Mr. Smith was on board of us later." While few facts are available regarding Smith's time at Fort Vancouver, this single line provides a glimpse of this well-known fur trader's time spent at the fort during the winter of 1828-29.

On July 14, 1828, Smith and his men had a fateful encounter with local Indians at the confluence of the Umpqua and Defeat (modern day Smith) rivers, along the central coast of Oregon. Following the deaths of nearly all of his men, Smith and the few survivors found their way to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post, Fort Vancouver. Smith arrived at the fort on August 10, 1828, which, coincidentally, was the day before the Brig *Owhyhee* set sail from New England.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor in charge of the HBC establishment, sent Alexander McLeod to assist Smith in recovering property lost in the battle south of the post. This expedition is well documented in McLeod's journal. McLoughlin then allowed Smith and his men to spend the winter at Fort Vancouver.<sup>3</sup>

Exactly what Smith did to occupy his time at the fort was not documented. It is known that he had several discussions with various HBC partners and drew at least one map of his travels. From Young's letter and the ship's log, it is also now known that Smith made no less than one visit to an American trading vessel during his winter at the trading post.

The Brig *Owhyhee*, under Captain John Dominis, crossed the bar of the Columbia River on February 22, 1829, and anchored in Baker's Bay. Trading soon began; six land otters and seven beavers were purchased from natives two days after arrival. Business was intermittent, almost stagnant, in those initial days on the river, so the crew worked their way up river toward Fort Vancouver. The dull monotony of a slow float upstream was broken on Monday, March 2. Though a hard rain was falling, the ship's log records, "a boat with Capt. Smith & the Dr. of the English came down. Bot some potatoes. Trade for a few furs. In the morning they returned up the river."<sup>4</sup>

At least eight other American ships were coasting the waters of the Pacific Northwest. Smith's visit to the *Owhyhee* could be indicative of social calls to other boats as well. He was known to have boarded ocean-going vessels during his southwestern expedition having visited several ship captains while on his journeys in

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California in 1826-27 – travels that culminated in his arrival at Fort Vancouver. He also traveled on board ships. Once was in early January 1827, from San Diego to San Pedro, on the *Courier* under Captain William H. Cunningham. A second sea voyage, departing November 15, 1827, on board the *Franklin*, under Captain John R. Cooper, took him from Monterey to San Francisco. Like many ocean travelers, Smith got seasick on this latter voyage.<sup>5</sup>

Another morsel of information resulting from Young's letter pertains to an apparent favor Smith provided for John Dominis, the captain of the *Owhyhee*. Dominis wrote a letter to the ship's owner, Josiah Marshall, in Boston. Marshall's instructions had been to "make a stand" on the river – to establish a temporary trading post; but Dominis wrote that such a plan would require forty or fifty men, which was more than his little expedition could spare. Additionally, McLoughlin tried to buy Dominis out, offering to pay him in lumber to trade in Hawaii, but the American refused to do business unless the HBC would pay in furs or pounds sterling.

Accordingly, Dominis decided to station another one of Marshall's vessels, the *Convoy*, in the Columbia River and cruise up the coast with the *Owhyhee*. He so informed Marshall in a letter written on March 4, 1829. Smith left Fort Vancouver to rejoin his partners in the Rocky Mountains on March 12, carrying this letter destined for the shipping company executive across the continent.<sup>6</sup>

This may indicate Smith was back aboard the *Owhyhee* on another occasion at which time Dominis requested Smith deliver the dispatch. However, as described in the ship's log, there were numerous interactions, back and forth, between the ship and men at the fort. The letter could also have been delivered to Smith by one of the ship's crew for conveyance eastward. It also raises the question of how many other sailors wrote letters home to be carried by Smith along with that of Dominis.

After months of being surrounded predominately by his British competitors, it must have been refreshing for Smith to have contact with fellow Americans, especially men who hailed from New England where Smith's family had originated. News from the United

States, even though a year old, would still have been interesting. To travel in the west for so long without seeing the Stars and Stripes, the sight of a red, white and blue flag flying from the mast of a ship must have excited Smith to some degree. It may also have added to nostalgic yearnings for home.

What is clear from the letter Dominis wrote to his benefactor is that Smith was willing to assist his fellow American businessman in competing against the British. In his letter to Marshall, Dominis wrote:

*I have been visited by the agent of the Hudson Bay Co. and Mr. Smith, an American inland trader, which by misfortune came in this country with the loss of his men & part of his property. From Mr. Smith, I rec'd some information concerning the Hudson Bay Co. and their collections.*<sup>7</sup>

Dominis proceeded to describe the information he learned from Smith regarding five HBC forts along the Columbia River, details of the number of their men, how often cargo ships arrive from England and the amount of fur gathered at various posts. It is likely that much of the remaining information Dominis related to his boss was also gleaned from discussions with Smith.

In his conclusion, Dominis makes this the statement:

*This letter will be forwarded to you by the before mentioned Mr. Smith, American trader across the Continent, which I think will go to Boston & call on you, from whom you will be able to obtain all other particulars required.*<sup>8</sup>

That Smith agreed to carry the letter across the country is not remarkable. However, that Smith has some notion to personally deliver it in Boston so that Marshall could interview him about the industry seems doubtful. Smith left Fort Vancouver, on March 12, and met up with business partner, David Jackson, somewhere along Flathead River, above the lake of the same name. Together, they traveled to Pierre's Hole to rendezvous with their other partner, William Sublette, on August 5, 1829.<sup>9</sup>

From there, they began preparations for the upcoming trapping season, which culminated in a winter

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encampment on the Wind River. It is from here that Smith wrote several letter home on Christmas Eve. While these letters give insight into Smith's frame of mind, none of them hint at thoughts of going to Boston. His writings portray a strong sense of homesickness so perhaps he wanted to be the one to take company dispatches back to the States rather than Sublette. But that was not to be for on Christmas Day, 1829, Sublette and one companion, Black Harris, donned snowshoes, loaded a train of pack dogs and headed for St. Louis. The letters Smith wrote the night before were carried eastward by Sublette and so, likely, was the letter from Captain Dominis to Josiah Marshall. That correspondence, written on the Columbia River, reached Boston exactly one year after it was written.<sup>10</sup>

Smith left the Rocky Mountains the following fall and returned to St. Louis, arriving on October 11, 1830. There is no evidence that Smith ever made his way to Boston to meet with Marshall or, for that matter, that Smith left Missouri at all until he headed out on the fateful expedition to Santa Fe that resulted in his death.<sup>11</sup>

The letters of Levi Young and John Dominis, along with the log of the *Owhyhee*, provide only a fleeting, almost ephemeral glimpse of Jedediah Smith's activities during a winter spent at Fort Vancouver. Yet, more insight into Smith's inquisitive nature regarding the fur trade business of his competitors can be gleaned from these sources. It also reminds historians that there is still new information to be found if one looks in the right places.

### NOTES

1. The letter written by Levi Young on June 10, 1829, is in the possession of Carol Kirchner of Kirkland, WA, having been passed down in her family along with other items in an old sea chest.
2. Dale Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1953), 256-279; F. A. Howay, "The Brig *Owhyhee* on the Columbia, 1829-30," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 1934): 10.
3. For McLeod's journal see Maurice Sullivan, *The Travels of Jedediah Smith* (Santa Ana, CA: Fine Arts Press, 1934), 112-135.
4. Howay, F.A. "The Brig *Owhyhee* on the Columbia," 10. The *Journal of a Voyage in the Brig Owhyhee from Boston to and from the N.W. Coast of North America* is housed in the California Historical Society's collection of the papers of John Dominis.
5. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, 206, 251-252.
6. Samuel Eliot Morison, "New England and the Opening of the Columbia River Salmon Trade, 1830," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (June 1927): 111-132. The letter is contained in its entirety in this article. The original letter is in the letter book of Josiah Marshall, Marshall MSS ii, in the Harvard College Library.
7. Morison, "Opening of the Columbia River Salmon Trade," 121.
8. *Ibid.*, 22.
9. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, 306.
10. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, 308.
11. *Ibid.*, 322.

## Links on the Web



**Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale Wyoming**

[www.museumofthemountainman.com](http://www.museumofthemountainman.com)

**Museum of the Fur Trade Chadron, Nebraska**

[www.furtrade.org](http://www.furtrade.org)

**San Joaquin Historical Society and Museum, Lodi, CA**

[www.sanjoaquinhistory.org](http://www.sanjoaquinhistory.org)

**California Conference of Historical Societies**

[www.californiahistorian.com](http://www.californiahistorian.com)

**Sutters Fort Sacramento, CA**

[www.suttersfort.org](http://www.suttersfort.org)



## Castor Announcements

### From the *Castor* Editor - Ed Sieckert

The 2016 Castor Newsletter will focus on Jedediah Strong Smith. This year will be the 60th Anniversary of the Jedediah Smith Society and we will celebrate this year with a special Rendezvous to focus on the event. **The Rendezvous will be October 8, 2016**, at San Joaquin Historical Society/Museum in Lodi, California. We hope all of you can join us for a special time. The Program is listed in the Events section of this newsletter. Jim Hardee will be the Keynote speaker and our winter edition author. Please note the Castor Canadensis is not responsible for either the research or opinions of our writers.



*Editorial review committee, Joe Molter, Wayne Knauf, Irene Steiner and Darrell Thomas. If you have an article you would like published in Castor submit it double spaced in MS Word format to the editor.*

### Members' Section

**New Members** We welcome these members.

**Russell and Pat Clough** – Palo Alto, California  
Interests: Jed Smith trails and mapping

**Rollie Bulock** – Fargo, North Dakota

#### *Donor List*

<b>Patron Level</b>	<b>Russel and Pat Clough</b> <b>Jim Stebinger</b>
<b>Sponsor Level</b>	<b>Art Hurley</b> <b>Jim Smith</b>

We thank you so much for your generous donations.

### New President of the Jedediah Smith Society

Please welcome Jim Smith of Helena, Montana for the 2016 year. Jim has been a long time Board member of the Jed Smith Society and has worked on the postage stamp for Jed and enjoys hiking and searching out Jed Smiths routes and rendezvous sites. The JSS Board of Directors wants to thank Bob Shannon, outgoing President for all the years of service to the Society.

### Web Site

[www.jedediahsmithsociety.org](http://www.jedediahsmithsociety.org)

The new Jedediah Smith Web site is up and running. It is excellent and represents a lot of work by Joe Molter and Irene Steiner, Soler Graphics. We thank you for your dedication.

### Facebook Page

The Jedediah Smith Society

Jim Smith, Board Member from Helena, Montana has started a new Facebook page and it is great. Take a look. Jim is always looking for ideas so feel free to contact Jim at [jimesmith@mt.net](mailto:jimesmith@mt.net)

### New Events 2016

#### June 11

##### Tracing Jed's trail over the Sierra Nevada Range

We will meet at Bear Valley to hear Eric Jung's presentation on his research and publication of the trail over the Sierra. We will then motor up to Hermit Valley to look at Jed's Overlook.

His booklet entitled First Crossing of the Sierra Nevada Hiked has been out of print and recently scanned and placed on a CD which is available on our web site and at this meeting.

*Lunch at the cafeteria is no host.*

#### October 8

##### 60th Anniversary Rendezvous

The 60th Anniversary Rendezvous at San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum, Lodi, CA. This will be a joint effort between Jedediah Smith Society, University of the Pacific and the San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum.

The program will feature five speakers who will share their perspectives on Jed Smith and the fur trade. In addition we will dedicate a location for a future monument on the museum grounds of a near by route Jed traveled. Registration will include lunch and commemorative CD.

See next page for additional information

### Word of the Day - Foofarah

This word was used in the Pacific Historian as a place for additional items of interest. It was used in the Fur Trade (Fort Bridger museum) to signify trade goods used by the Fur Trappers with the Indians.

# 60th Anniversary Program

## October 8, 2016

<b>Location</b>	<b>San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum, Lodi, CA.</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Presentation</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
9:30-9:45	<b>Welcome</b>	Jim Smith, President Jedediah Smith Society  Dr. Edie Sparks, Chair, History Dept. University of the Pacific
9:45-9:50	<b>Invocation</b>	Rev. Darrell Thomas
9:50-10:20	<b>Jedediah Smith and the Green River Rendezvous</b>	Jim Hardee, Editor The Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal
10:25-11:10	<b>The Sea Otter Fur Trade in California</b>	Dr. Richard Ravalli History Professor Willam Jessup University
11:15-12:00	<b>State of California Assembly Resolution to Jedediah Smith Society</b>  <b>Dedication of the site of Jedediah Smith's path crossed the Lodi area</b>	Susan Eggman Assemblywoman  David Stuart- Director San Joaquin Historical Society/Museum  Mr. Chuck Winn, San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors
12:00-1:00	<b>Lunch Catered by Bueno Italiano</b>	
1:15-2:00	<b>Jedediah Smith and His Travels to Mission San Jose</b>	Dr. James Shebl Professor of Literature emeritus, University of the Pacific
2:00-2:45	<b>Jedediah Smith and His Early Life in Ohio</b>	James Auld, Author and researcher on Jedediah Smith
2:45-3:30	<b>Arms and Trade Goods of the Fur Trade</b>	Milton von Dam Author and JSS Member

**Registration is \$30.00 per person and includes lunch, program and 60th Anniversary commemorative disk. Send check to Jedediah Smith Society, 1040 W. Kettleman Ln. #140, Lodi, CA 95240**

## Fall 2015 Rendezvous

The Fall 2015 Rendezvous was held at Sutter's Fort, with a pioneer dinner, presentation by Steve Beck, Fort historian and a tour of activities including the blacksmith shop. The dinner was held in the old distillery room of the fort and enjoyed by all. Thanks to Rich Cimino, board member, for setting this meeting up and making sure our members enjoyed the event.



## Jedediah Smith Society Scholarship Award



the history field. We thank you for your research and presentation on Jedediah Smith.

The award is presented annually to a University of the Pacific student majoring in Western History or preparing for Social Sciences teaching. In Fall 2014 **Sienna Gerbert** presented a paper on Jedediah Smith to Dr. William Swagerty's history class. She was selected for her academic professionalism and work in

## Monuments and Sites

**Utah** - While on a trip to Utah Joe Molter, JSS Board member discovered a new monument and statue dedicated to Jedediah Smith. He followed Jed's trail along the Sevier River that he used in 1826-27 on his way to California. Jed followed Clear Creek to the west of the present day site of Fremont Indian State Park. The Park and Fish Lake National Forest commissioned this statue and horse. Jake Christianson of the Jacob Dean



Studio was the metal sculptor. It was inspired by Harvey T. Dunn's painting of Jedediah Smith in the Badlands. The site can be reached off of I-70 near Richfield, Utah. A dedication of the monument is planned in March 2016.

For more information contact Fremont Indian State Park at 435-527-4631.

## Archives Corner

**Joe Molter** also gave me a copy of a detailed bibliography done by Richard L. Dyer, Instructor of American History (emeritus) Columbia College. Entitled Jedediah Strong Smith: Trails West. This article was prepared and presented in 1991 for the Oregon California Trails Association Convention. The article is well researched, written and will be placed in the Publications section of the JSS Web Site.

**Trish Richards**, University of the Pacific, Holt-Atherton library, Special Collections retired this fall and we want to thank her for the support she has given the Jedediah Smith Society. We wish you the best in your retirement.

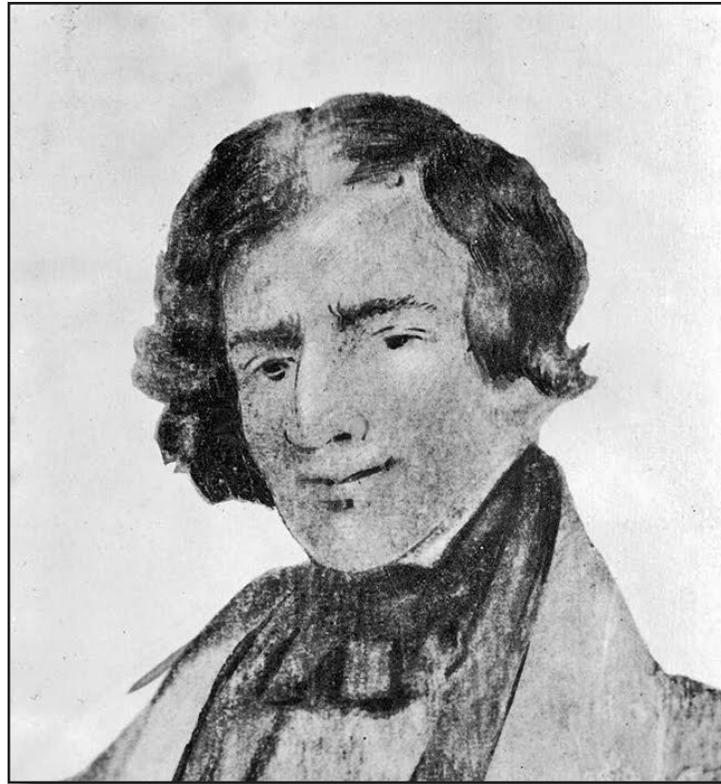
## INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN

Jedediah Smith Society membership is open to all who wish to join in support of research, preservation and information about the 1st American arriving overland 1826 and other California pioneers of the 18th & 19th centuries.

Student \$10.00	Individual \$20.00
Sponsor \$50.00	Patron \$100.00

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Please make check payable to: JEDEDIAH SMITH SOCIETY  
Mail to Treasurer: 1040 West Kettleman Lane #147, Lodi, CA 95240



Jedediah Smith Society  
1040 West Kettleman Lane #147  
Lodi, CA 95240

**Make sure your dues are up to date.  
Dues were due Jan 1, 2016.**