



CASTOR CANADENSIS

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

WINTER 2009

2009 Fall Rendezvous

By Joe Molter

This years Fall Rendezvous was held in Ulysses, Kansas on Friday and Saturday of October 23rd and 24th, and to my knowledge was the first time this event was held outside the state of California! The theme for this special gathering was “Tracing Jed’s Last Days”, which hints to the reason we met in this far off location. It’s the ties to Jedediah Smith and his last venture along the Cimarron trail which on the 27th of May, 1831, he met his demise near what is called Lower Springs of the Cimarron River and later renamed Wagon Bed Springs. Jedediah



Joe Molter



Wagon Bed Springs on the Cimarron Route of the Santa Fe Trail.

and his old partners were leading a caravan of 74 men, of which two were Jed’s brothers, and 22 wagons which contained merchandise destined for trade in Santa Fe, then in Mexican territory and today in the state of New Mexico. When conditions became critical along the Cimarron Route of the Santa Fe Trail due to lack of water, “near four days without any”,¹ Jed and others went in search for this precious commodity. This would be the last time his brothers and comrades would see Jedediah! His mysterious disappearance wouldn’t be explained until the caravan had moved onto Santa Fe and Jed’s brothers discovered “Spanish Traders”² selling their brothers “guns and pistols”.¹ The Traders had purchased these items from the Indians (believed to be Comanche)¹ who told them their gristly story of how they had dispatched a lone rider while lying in wait at a watering hole along the Cimarron River and relived him of his possessions!

As I drove through Grant County, Kansas on Friday the 23rd nearing my destination of the city of Ulysses, I wondered what these flat plains which are now occupied with agricultural fields of milo, corn, wheat and cotton would reveal to me as I followed Jedediah Smith last

trail. That evening a “Meet and Greet” had been planned at the Historic Adobe Museum were we would pick-up our event information packets, tour the museum complex and partake of light food & drink. I was pleasantly surprised on entering the museum, which appears small from the outside, to be just the opposite, with spacious rooms containing well crafted exhibits of artifacts, pictures and life-size exhibits portraying life on the high plains and a gift shop with a wonderful selection of books!

The following day we boarded and filled a large road bus of interested participants who were eager to tour and learn more about the Cimarron Route, the one Jedediah



James Smith at Middle Crossing of Arkansas River where the Cimarron Route leaves the Mountain Route portion of the Santa Fe Trail.

and his caravan had followed some 178 years before. The day was clear and cool, not windy and cold as the previous day was, as we head up to the Arkansas River to the Middle Crossing. Here this route at this point crossed this river, leaving the “Mountain Route”

portion of the Santa Fe Trail and heads in a southwest direction towards the Cimarron River. Our guide was Jeff Trotman, a local resident and member of the Jedediah Smith Society and the Santa Fe Trail Association, who has spent much time studying this route and was gracious to share many interesting details he has uncovered. As we intercepted

portions of the trail using the patchwork of farm roads that covers these areas, Jeff was pointing out historic sites and markers and reading from period diaries as we progressed along the trail. For lunch we stopped at a fire hall in some obscure, small, gathering of homes to be surprised with a delicious home-made meal by a couple of Mennonite families, which included fresh pies for dessert!



John Talbot getting a closer look at the Jedediah Smith monument at Wagon Bed Springs overlook.

After lunch, we strolled a couple houses down to Ken



Ken Weidner spearing a target on his Indian pony.

Weidner's place for a demonstration of Plains Indian life and culture. This man has spent years studying these tribes and has replicated their tools, weapons, clothing and way of life which he portrayed to us quite accurately. On

arriving to his backyard, we were greeted with gun shots and war hoops as Ken rode in on his Indian pony and proceeded to share and demonstrate with us the equestrian and domestic skills these "Peoples of the Plains" had and needed to survive. His fully stocked Tepee and other related hand crafted items complemented his vast knowledge of these tribes, making our visit a rich and rewarding experience.

Our tour ended at the Lower Cimarron Springs or Wagon Bed Springs. The later name came about years after Jed's passage when a wooden wagon bed was placed in the ground below the springs to capture the water for a watering trough and today they have reinstalled the wagon bed in which water still pours into! This site has been designated a National Historic Landmark and several monuments have been erected to commemorate its importance, as well as to Jedediah Strong Smith who lost his life somewhere in this area. Even though the exact site of Jed's death has not been actually determined, most historians believe it occurred within an eight mile radius of the site. As Jeff Trotman, our guide said, "there should have been someone in that expedition who was keeping a journal and possibly its still exists today to fill us in on the missing details, so keep your eyes open"!

That evening, our 2009 Fall Rendezvous culminated with a Banquet held at the Grant County Civic Center and here again we experienced another delicious meal. Sixty people were in attendance for this final event with eight of these being Jedediah Smith Society members. An extensive collection of historic items found along the trail was on display that evening and the U.S. Postal Service was present to cancel stamped envelopes with a specially prepared Commemorative Stamp Cancellation in honor of the combined events of Ulysses, Kansas Centennial Celebration and the Jedediah Smith Society 2009 Fall Rendezvous. Two speakers capped this event with Michael Olsen, a retired Professor and member of the Santa Fe Trail Association, speaking on the importance of the Santa Fe Trail and myself, speaking on the Jedediah Smith Society, its objectives and the life of Jedediah, his adventures, contributions and his last days along the Cimarron Trail.

The Jedediah Smith Society again would like to thank Jeff Trotman, who was presented the Society's Eager

Beaver Award at the Banquet for his coordination and efforts associated with the historical aspects of this event and Marieta Hauser with the Grant County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism for her wonderful support and arrangements that made this event a success and such an enjoyable time.

¹ Letter of Austin Smith to Ira G. Smith dated Sept. 24th 1831 dated Sept. 24th 1831, Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West, Dale L. Morgan, Univ. Nebraska Press, 1953. pgs. 363-364.

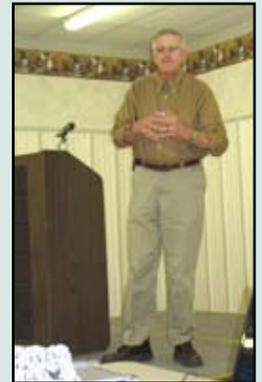
Rendezvous Photos



Some of the JSS members attending the 2009 Fall Rendezvous.

From left to right: Jeff Trotman, Joe Molter, Albert Eddins, James Smith & John Talbot.

Photo by Jim Smith.



Michael Olson speaking on the importance of the Santa Fe Trail.



Joe Molter speaking on Jedediah's life.

Photo by Linda Molter.



Jeff Trotman (left) receiving the "Eager Beaver" award from Joe Molter (right).



Ken Weidner explaining Plains Indian custom and culture.



Running White Fawn and Zacharias Bones in their Rendezvous clothes.

2009 Fall Rendezvous

By James Smith

We spent two nights in Ulysses, KS. Look that up on your Rand McNally! Ulysses sits atop the old Santa Fe Trail route from St. Louis to Santa Fe. It's incredibly flat country farmland for sure, bread basket and feedlot of the nation. All the roads in the area, paved and dirt, are laid out in a perfect grid, in either one or six mile increments. Across these square pieces of prairie cuts the Santa Fe Trail in a diagonal going from northeast to southwest.



Kathy and I set out at about 5am last Thursday morning. We arrived in Scott's Bluff, Nebraska that evening... We set out due south the next morning and cruised down the east side of Colorado all day Friday, until we cut east and headed in to Ulysses, KS We were a day behind a snowstorm there in eastern Colorado. All day long we passed through snow covered fields, driving along on a recently plowed two lane road, bit of anxiety mixed with relief that day. We got into Ulysses around 4 o'clock Friday. The local chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Assn., hosted a nice reception.... On Saturday morning, 42 piled on to a nice bus and went driving all over those farm roads, stopping every now and again to see a place where the Santa Fe Trail crosses the road.



We'd get out every so often and view the old wagon ruts as they crossed one of the roads we were on. We first drove 40-50 miles from Ulysses to the little town of Cimarron, which is on the Arkansas River. This is where the wagons would cross the river if they were taking the Cimarron Cutoff; and struck off SW for the Cimarron River, about 60 miles of dry, empty prairie. This is probably where Jedediah and his wagon train crossed the Arkansas River.



Ken Weidner and his Indian pony.

About half way to our destination we stopped at a rural fire hall for a wonderful lunch that was prepared by the Menonites in the area [of] chicken pot pie, candied apples, for dessert a variety of pies.

After lunch we walked over to a farm house where a fellow named Ken Weidemer gave us a



great lesson on the Indians of the southern plains. He gave us a great display of horsemanship, had lots of artifacts and exhibits arranged around a tipi erected in the yard.

...We set out for the Cimarron and Wagon Bed Springs. ...South of Ulysses... WB Springs is on the banks of the dry Cimarron ..where Jed was killed... scouting the way for the wagon train, on May 27, 1831.... There is an old wagon bed set in the ground there that captures the water coming out of the spring.... a major rest stop on the trail being the first dependable water since the Arkansas.



Wagon at Bed Spring.

...Some say that Jed and the Comanches saw one another from across the barren plain, and that Jed more or less rode up to them and tried to treat with them, to no avail. Some say that Smith and his companions had been without water for 2-3 days, and/or that they were lost as of May 27th. Some say the Comanche had just concluded a trading session with a group of Comancheros' (these were half-breed outlaws who carried on a delicate and hazardous trade with the Comanche nation) when Smith rode into the Springs.



Inside the teepee.

They might have been observers to his death. Still others say that Jed was surprised and ambushed by the Comanches – pure and simple. In any case, he was killed and his body never found.

...Ed Lewis who was born and raised in the area... tells a tale of some kids finding two skeletons in a pack rat nest. ... Most interesting to me, was Ed's belief Jed was neither lost nor desperate for water. ...the trail had been used by thousands of wagons between 1822 and 1831 ... the Smith wagon train certainly would have filled every barrel and bucket at the Arkansas River before setting



Ed Lewis and John Talbot.

out across the plains to the Cimarron.

...For me, this was a very moving experience. I've been trying to get to [this area]... for 25 years or thereabouts. I've been all over the west on Jed's trail, but never to Wagon



Rifles, guns, shot molds and Indian Plew.

2009 Fall Rendezvous Continued By James Smith

Bed Springs and the solemn place before.

At the dinner that night Joe Molter, the last speaker put together a wonderful power point on Jedediah with lots of neat paintings, drawings, maps, photos, etc. The combined meeting of the Jedediah Smith Society and Santa Fe Trail Association was a tremendous success.

On Sunday, Kathy and I hit the road again as the dawn broke over the plains. We cut across Colorado and a NW angle, and cruised thru Denver around noon ending in Cheyenne WY that night. We had set off on I-80 for Rawlins, but a snowstorm on the way to Laramie turned us back to Cheyenne. Off again the next morning in clear blue skies to Lava Hot Springs ID, a favorite stopping point where friends from Boise joined us for dinner and the springs baths.

The following morning on the way to Montana a light snow fell... It had not been the best forecast. We didn't have breakfast. Heading North we lucked out. The roads were bare and dry. Mondia Pass was fine too, thank goodness. There were storms all around us in the mountains, but we arrived home about 4 pm... six days and 2350 miles later. Snowed last night 2-3 inches. Nice to be back!



Rendezvous Display.

More Rendezvous Photos



John Talbot at Santa Fe Trail description board.



John Talbot and Jeff Trotman.



Indian Horse Presentation.



Display of Indian Goods



Survival framework for travois.



Wagon Bed Springs "Yeah, I made it!"



Jeff talking at Wagon Bed Spring.



Traveling attendees.



Map of Cimarron.



"Which way?"



Photo Credit - Doug Dumler

EWING YOUNG GETS HIS DUE

by Amanda Newman

Add another holiday to the calendar: Ewing Young Day. Young, one of the Newberg, Oregon, state's early and most prominent settlers, was recognized by the Legislature this month for his contributions to the state and impact on Oregon's eventual development of a government.



Senate Bill 625, sponsored by state Senator Larry George and Representatives Kim Thatcher and Matt Wingard at the request of Friends of Historic Champoeg, declares February 9, Ewing Young Day. The bill was unanimously passed by the Senate and confirmed by the House.

"We are delighted with the passage of the bill... It's a real honor for Newberg, said Greg Leo of the 'Friends.' "The story of Ewing Young is really important for the people, especially the school children, of Oregon to remember."

Young, a trapper and trader through out Mexico and the American frontier west, came to Oregon in 1834 when the governor of California decided he wanted the trappers out of his state, Leo said. "When he got to the Willamette Valley, he said: 'This is horse heaven. This is the most beautiful horse land in the world.'"

Young settled across the Willamette River from Champoeg, about 3.5 miles northeast of what is now Newberg, and claimed 50 miles of land in every direction. He built the first sawmill and established the first trading post in the area. When other settlers arrived in the area, he helped them stake claims of their own.

The Hudson's Bay Company effectively ruled the land at the time and owned all the livestock. Settlers could rent cattle from the company, but were not allowed to purchase them.

John McLoughlin, the company's head in the area, and Jason Lee, Oregon's first missionary, didn't agree on much, Leo said. But when Young created the first distillery in Oregon, they united to stop him. In 1837, they convinced Young to return to California and drive up a herd of cattle, to end the livestock monopoly. Beginning with 800 cattle and ending with 630, Young drove the herd along the Siskiyou Trail to Willamette Valley. The move broke Hudson's Bay's monopoly and made Young the richest man in Oregon. "It's just a spectacular Western epic," Leo said.

But the move had much more far reaching effects: It eventually lead to the creation of Oregon's government. When wolves began preying on the cattle, the settlers had to hold "wolf meetings" to decide what to do. They were the first organized decision-making meetings in the area, and set the path for further governing, Leo said.

Young's death on February 9, 1841, had an even greater impact on the state. "He was the richest man in Oregon, he'd staked most of the settlers, he had no heir... and he died without a will." To settle the estate, the settlers elected Ira Babcock as the first probate and supreme judge for Oregon. The wolf meetings and Babcock's election led into the 1843 establishment of a provisional government at Champoeg, which in turn led to Oregon's 1859 statehood.

"What we have today did not happen easily, but came through struggle, sacrifice and an entrepreneurial spirit," Thatcher added. "We hope school children across Oregon will learn to love his colorful life."

The bill is headed to Governor Ted Kulongoski for signature. The signing will later be commemorated, likely in June, by a Friends of Historic Champoeg ceremony at Young's grave site, a big oak tree at Oakhurst Equine, just outside Newberg.

[Thanks Troy Tuggle for this interesting piece.]

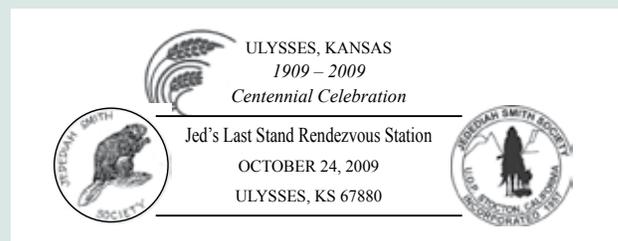
CAPT'N SAYS

Rendezvous 2009

We are very grateful to all in Ulysses who helped make the Society welcome, and supported a successful Rendezvous 2009 out-of-state; especially the Santa Fe Trail Wagon Bed Springs Chapter, and Grant County Chamber of Commerce who co-hosted the event.



We have some postmark envelopes available. Send request to the office. A voided USPS cancellation stamp from the celebration will be placed in archives for future display.



Invoices

Membership invoices have been mailed to all who need to renew. Please send renewal ASAP as the office will be closed January through February for moving to Union City. I am scheduled 1-4 pm, 16 February and need time to unpack and organize.

Growth

The best news is a number of new younger members; many from the web site. Keep up the recruiting.

Vol. I,II,III Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal are available \$30 each volume.

INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN

Membership in the Jedediah Smith Society is open to all who wish to join in supporting research, preservation and information about the 1st American to arrive overland into CA and other California pioneers of the 18th Century

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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

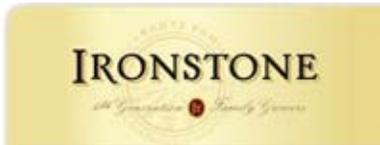
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Please make check payable to: JEDEDIAH SMITH SOCIETY
Al Clover, Acacia Creek, Bldg. A, 34400 Mission Blvd. #1116
Union City, CA 94587



SPRING LUNCHEON 2010



IRONSTONE WINERY
Murphy's California
Saturday, April 24, 2010
Gather: 12:00 • Lunch: 12:30

Speaker: Nadia West
Topic: New Book



Select from: Tri-Tip, Chicken, Vegetarian
Price: \$25.00 Wine Bar *No Host*

Reservation, Selection and Payment required in advance. *No walk ins.*

BEFORE April 16 to

Dr. Clover, Acacia Creek, Bldg. A, 34400 Mission Blvd. #1116, Union City, CA 94587



Jedediah Smith Society
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Dues will expire Jan 1st

