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Bluffs, Beavers, and Bullets: The Explorations of Jedediah Smith and His Contributions Toward the Realization of Manifest Destiny

BY, ELI IDEC

(We are pleased to reprint this author's paper which won him the Frederick Rudolph Prize for Historical Writing. He is currently a High School student at Wyoming Seminary, a Methodist College Preparatory School located in the Wyoming Valley of Northeastern Pennsylvania.)

In the Spring of 1822, The *St. Louis Press* displayed an advertisement calling for “One Hundred Enterprising Young men ... to ascend the Missouri to its source, there to be employed for one, two, or three years. Signed, William H. Ashley.” Ashley’s appeal for men initiated a new chapter in the highly lucrative fur trade, and started a new era of westward expansion.¹ Among the brave men to answer the call was young Jedediah Smith, who at the age of twenty-three, impressed Ashley enough to earn his spot within Ashley’s ranks of trappers and Mountain men. Smith was born in Jericho, New York, on January 6, 1799. His forefathers had been “vigorous adventurers who challenged the barriers of the wilderness,” and as a young boy, Smith followed in their footsteps.² From a young age, Smith hunted and explored along the Susquehanna River Valley, and in 1817, his family moved to Ohio. The area in which his family settled was wild, unpopulated, and made for excellent hunting and trapping.³ His life in the backcountry shaped Smith into a man of adventure. Despite the extensive wilderness experience that he received throughout his youth, nothing could prepare Smith for the challenges that he would face over the next eight years in the perilous frontier. Since Anglo-Americans arrived on the eastern seaboard, they had continuously been pushing westward. From the movement of colonists inland in 1630, to the breaching of the Appalachians in the 1750’s, to the closing of the American Frontier in 1890, Americans have been drawn westward into the unknown. Mountain Man Jedediah Smith was no different: his extensive explorations in the American West pushed him farther than any man before him, and in doing so, he advanced his country’s quest for Manifest Destiny. During his expeditions, Smith discovered new western lands and travel routes, laid the foundation for a profitable fur trade, and challenged foreign nations vying for control of the West.

In 1822 Jedediah Smith began the first of three major expeditions during which he would

make important geographical discoveries. Under Ashley’s orders, young Jedediah left St. Louis onboard the *Enterprise*, and headed up the Missouri River on his first excursion into the frontier. Unfortunately, the treacherous waters of the Missouri made it difficult to maneuver such a large vessel. That May, the mast of the *Enterprise* struck an overhanging tree and the vessel was overturned, casting all the supplies and men into the murky water.⁴ Word was quickly sent to Ashley in St. Louis, and he promptly sent another boat and supplies up the river. The new boat picked up the trappers at their makeshift camp, but left a few men including Smith to hunt along the riverbank as the keelboat continued up the river. According to Smith, “For some distance up the Missouri the country is very fine, and as the general kept me constantly hunting, to which I was by no means adverse, I was able to enjoy the full novelty of the scene in which I was placed.”⁵ After trading with Ree villages for horses, Ashley decided to split his company into two groups: one would continue up the Missouri, and the other would travel over land to the Yellowstone River. On October 1st the overland party reached Fort Henry at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. While Ashley returned to St. Louis to prepare a second expedition, Jed and a few other trappers were sent up the Yellowstone to

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Featured Article	1-6
President’s Message	7-8
Wall and Interactive Maps	8
Those That Know Him	9-10
Events: <i>(including 2018 Rendezvous Utah)</i>	11-12
Archives Corner - Material Culture of the Far Western	
Fur Trade in the 1820’s	13-14
New JSS Position Openings	15
Members’ Book Corner	15
Members’ Section: New Member, Donor List, JSS Officers, Award of Recognition, In Memoriam, Relatives of JSS	16

Bluffs, Beavers, and Bullets:

The Explorations of Jedediah Smith and His Contributions Toward the Realization of Manifest Destiny



hunt game and “to take what Beaver we could conveniently.” Smith and the other trappers then met with Major Henry and wintered along the Musselshell River. The next year Ashley along with two keelboats moved up the Missouri. In need of horses, Major Henry sent Smith downriver to inform Ashley. The message was received and the company anchored their boats under two Ree villages overlooking the river. The trade commenced without any problems, but that night, while camping on a beach below the Arikara village, the Indians attacked, and by morning, fourteen members of the party had been killed. The Arikara Massacre was one of the deadliest in the entire Rocky Mountain fur trade era, but Smith emerged as a proven leader.⁶ He was praised by his fellow trappers as resourceful and trustworthy, and was named the company’s captain several weeks later.

After the massacre, Smith led his party west, and resumed his trek toward the Rocky Mountains. While moving through a narrow riverbed, Smith was charged and attacked by a grizzly bear. According to Clyman, a member of the party, the “Grizzly laid the skull bare to near the crown of his head leaving a white streak where his teeth passed.”⁷ Clyman hastily sewed his face back together, and amazingly, only two weeks later Smith was back on the trail. The party moved westward into central Wyoming, where they wintered for the season. Realizing that it was time to find good beaver while the fur was still in its winter prime, Smith led his party through a pass in the Wind River Mountains, but their path was cut off by a deep snowpack, and they were forced to retreat. Luckily, Smith ran into a group of Crow Indians who informed them that following the south fork of the Wind River would take him to a southeastern pass.⁸ In March, the party set off again,

and following the instructions of the Crows, passed through a divide between the Big Sandy River and Sweetwater River. Smith and his fellow trappers had just rediscovered South Pass, the discovery of which was originally attributed to Robert Stuart in 1812. Because Stuart’s discovery was largely forgotten, Smith was the effective discoverer of the pass.⁹ His find was one of the most important in American History as the pass would later allow thousands of Americans to cross into the west with relative ease. Unlike the inhospitable North Pass that Lewis and Clark had used in 1805, South Pass provided easy travel through the continental divide. The route had every advantage as a channel of communication between the east and the west. Its path was direct, avoided major changes in elevation, and had a favorable location between major rivers. It was easily the most functional way over the Rocky Mountains.¹⁰ Based on information Ashley brought back east after the discovery of the pass, a number of newspapers printed stories about the role it could play in westward expansion. In March 1826, *The St. Louis Enquirer* professed “Those great barriers of nature, The Rocky Mountains, have been called up in judgment against the practicality of establishing a communication between this point and the Pacific Ocean.” Smith and the trappers had acted as “advance agents of empire” and their discovery would later ignite an era of national expansionism.¹¹

After the 1825 rendezvous, Ashley needed a new partner in his venture as Andrew Henry had retired. Someone would have to take on the role of the new field captain, and Smith was the perfect candidate. So after returning to St. Louis with Ashley on October 4th 1825, Smith was made a partner of the company. Ashley would eventually sell his interest to the newly created Smith, Jackson, and Sublette partnership during the rendezvous of 1826.

South Pass was not the only major western route that Smith discovered. During his expedition to the Southwest, Jedediah Smith traversed deserts and mountains to reach California, the first American to do so. It was Jim Bridger’s 1824 discovery of the Great Salt Lake that aroused Smith’s interest in the land that lay to its west.¹² An excerpt taken from Smith’s journal reads: “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.”¹³ Though Smith was fueled by exploration, his business was beaver, and he hoped the lands that he discovered would be full of them. On August 22, 1826, Smith left with eighteen trappers under his command, and headed into an unknown wilderness. After following the Colorado River, the men crossed through the Black Mountains and into the Mojave Valley. After learning that Mexican settlements in California were only ten days away, Smith set off across the Mohave Desert in hopes that they would be able to resupply once they reached California. The journey consumed sixteen days of life-sapping heat and brutal travel through desert and salt plains. After only the sixth day of travel, Smith and his men

Bluffs, Beavers, and Bullets:

The Explorations of Jedediah Smith and His Contributions Toward the Realization of Manifest Destiny

were running dangerously low on food.¹⁴ By mid-November, they descended into the lush San Bernardino Valley in dreadful shape. The “rugged and miserable” men shambled along beside emaciated horses bearing the loads of “Fur Traps, Saddlebags, Guns, and Blankets.”¹⁵ Despite their condition, Smith and his eighteen men had accomplished an incredible feat. They completed a grueling desert crossing, traveling over thirteen hundred miles without losing a single man. The problem was that they were now trespassing on Mexican land. The men were accepted generously into Mission San Gabriel, but Smith was ordered into San Diego to meet with Governor Echeandia. Believing Smith was a spy and suspicious of his intentions in California, the Governor ordered the Americans leave the same way they had arrived. The party soon set off back through the San Bernardino Mountains, heading northerly along the backside of this range and entering the southern end of the Central Valley, catching beaver along the way. By April, the trappers had accumulated 1500 pounds of beaver pelts, which they would need to take back east to the rendezvous.¹⁶ However, the towering Sierra Nevada Mountain range stood in the trappers’ way. In his journal Smith wrote, “I begin making arrangements for marching eastward toward the Rendezvous in the Mountains which I then looked on as a home.” The trappers’ first attempted crossing was a complete failure. With snow eight feet deep and more falling from the sky, Smith admitted the conditions made “the prospect of proceeding very doubtful.”¹⁷ Smith decided that the best course of action would be to leave the brigade behind and cross the Sierras with only two of his best men. With 7 horses and 2 mules, Smith was able to cross the Mountains in eight days.¹⁸ However crossing the Great Basin was a challenge of its own. It contained some of the toughest terrain that Smith had yet faced. When Smith and his men finally arrived at the rendezvous over a month later they were “mere skeletons.” According to Smith, there was great excitement from the fur trappers in camp as “myself and party had been given up as lost.”¹⁹ The completion of the journey had made Smith the first American to cross overland to California through the southwest, and the first white man to cross over the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the treacherous Great Basin.

Soon thereafter Smith’s party set off once again from the rendezvous to rejoin the men he had left behind in northern California, intending to trap his way up the coast to the Columbia.²⁰ On the way, Smith once again encountered the Mohave Indians, who on their previous journey had been peaceful. After stowing supplies in rafts to cross the Colorado River, some of the trappers began swimming the rafts across the river. About half of Smith’s party remained on the bank when the Mohaves raised a war cry and started attacking the trappers with clubs, arrows, and rocks.²¹ Jedediah Smith and a handful of his men watched as their comrades were hacked to death on the opposite beach. As hundreds of Indians began swimming across the river toward his men, Smith took action, and “lopped down the small trees in such manner as to clear a

place in which to stand while the fallen poles formed a slight breastwork.” As the Indians approached, Smith ordered his men to fire and the Indians dispersed. Awaiting nightfall, Smith and his remaining men escaped into the desert, and eventually reached the trappers that he had left behind. After reaching his men, the party was in a dire need of supplies and horses. He would out of necessity “try once more for the hospitality of the Californias.” Smith traveled to Mission San Jose and was later escorted to Monterey as an intruder. After being assessed again by Governor Echeandia, Smith was released and allowed to purchase supplies and 300 horses and mules. Soon thereafter he began the expedition up through what was then called “Alta California” towards the coast to the Columbia River.²² From January to June of 1828, the trappers slowly moved north in the unrelenting rain, trapping as they went. Traveling deep into northern California, Smith turned northwest toward the Pacific Coast. After nearly 6 months “on the road” the brigade passed into Oregon territory and marched towards the Columbia River.²³ In the middle of July, Smith and two men canoed up the north branch of the Umpqua River on a reconnaissance mission. When they returned later that day and approached camp, a large group of Kelawatset Indians began to slaughter the fifteen trappers still in camp. Smith and his companions paddled to the far shore, and rushed to Fort Vancouver, controlled by the rival Hudson Bay Company. Only one man in camp, Arthur Black, managed to escape and made his way 100 miles to Fort Vancouver. Despite the deaths of Smith’s men, they had accomplished an amazing feat. The brigade had been the first group of white men to travel overland from California to Oregon. Smith’s expedition into the Northwest was later traced onto twenty maps.²⁴

Through his expeditions, Smith gained an understanding of the far west that was superior to any other men of his era. According to the American Geographical Society, “Long before any other man of discernment, Jedediah Smith learned and understood the nature of the complex area known as the American Far West.”²⁵ Because of his untimely death by Comanches in 1831, a large section of Smith’s geographical records were lost forever, but the information that he did provide was inscribed on the most accurate map of the time.²⁶ His original map is now gone, but its content was overlaid by George Gibbs on a map drawn by John C. Fremont. Had Smith’s complete knowledge been revealed, he would have surely advanced American understanding of the west by fifteen years, for Fremont’s map of the west did not appear until 1845.

In addition to his significant geographical discoveries, Smith also made important contributions to the fur trade in America. The quest for wealth, self-reliance, and adventure were paramount to the realization of Manifest Destiny, and a profitable fur trade encompassed all three aspects. When Ashley’s men left in 1822, one of the most popular newspapers of the day, *The Niles Weekly Register*, wrote

Bluffs, Beavers, and Bullets:

The Explorations of Jedediah Smith and His Contributions Toward the Realization of Manifest Destiny

that “if they are successful, the expedition will not only be very profitable to themselves, but a great national benefit, in laying the foundation for an extensive fur trade.”²⁷ Their prediction was prophetic. By the time Smith was killed, few others matched his contributions to the fur trade. He and his colleagues made a major improvement to the fur trade through the introduction of the rendezvous system. Prior to the rendezvous system, trader-forts were the means by which furs were collected and transported back east. Indians would supply furs to “factories” which were exchanged for substandard goods.²⁸ This method eventually failed and was unable to turn a sizable profit because the factories were often so poorly managed that Indians refused to trade there. Instead, Ashley and Smith pioneered the rendezvous system, which revolutionized the trade. The system was first used in 1825. A party of one hundred men was dispatched into the Rocky Mountains, where they then split up into small fur trapping brigades. The men trapped from the fall until the summer, at which point a rendezvous was held at a prearranged time and location. The trappers brought the season’s fur to this location, where they were given a prearranged rate of one hundred and thirty dollars, or some “free trappers” instead received a fixed rate for each fur that they had brought.²⁹ Fresh men and supplies were also sent to the rendezvous from St. Louis. The firm of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette marked up goods and charged extremely high prices for common items like blankets, gunpowder, and muskets. The annual Rocky Mountain rendezvous was held in either Wyoming, Utah, or Idaho at a central location, which was easily reached by all directions. Because of this location, rival fur companies converged and established deals and other arrangements with one another. This yearly meeting “took on the aspect of an international fair.”³⁰ When the event ended, trappers who wanted to continue trekked back into the wilderness with fresh supplies and traps, and those who longed to return back east, left with the caravan that took the newly caught fur to St. Louis. The large caravans constituted perfect transportation because their large numbers of men protected them from dangerous Indian raids. This system completely altered how furs were collected, exchanged, and distributed back east, and its introduction ushered in a new era of western trade.³¹

During the second rendezvous of 1826, Ashley decided to sell his interest in the company to the emerging leaders of the fur trade: Smith, Jackson, and Sublette. The new firm’s aim was to “find new frontiers for American fur interests and in so doing to focus national attention on the west.”³² Even though Ashley sold out to the new partners, the contract gave him the rights to sell their furs. While Sublette ran and organized supply trains to the rendezvous, Jackson led his trapping parties through territory already under control of American trappers. Meanwhile, Smith led with his men to the far reaches of the frontier, searching for new productive fur areas to trap. When the three men returned from their exploits in 1827, they had already raised 22,690 dollars worth of fur,

equivalent to just over half a million dollars today. During the same year, Ashley was in the middle of negotiating with the French Fur Company; if completed the French would have come into direct conflict with Smith, Jackson, and Sublette on the fur plains of the west. Luckily Sublette was able to sabotage the new partnership by offering Ashley an enticing deal. If the French had joined forces with Ashley, there most certainly would have been a fur war between the Americans and the French that would have “obscured the importance of the west to the nation.”³³ Because of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette’s astounding success they were granted a license that permitted them to trade with Indians for two years west of the Rocky Mountains. Thus, the partnership became a threat to the Hudson Bay Company’s monopoly on the fur trade in the northwest. For the first time, Americans clashed with the British for occupancy of the Northwest coast under the convention of 1818. The firm’s intrusion into the disputed Oregon territory had “enormous weight at the conference table when the final Anglo-American settlement of the Oregon country was made in 1846.”³⁴ The three men split at the 1827 rendezvous. Smith returned to the west coast and then moved up the coast to Oregon. Meanwhile, Jackson remained in the mountains, and Sublette roamed through Blackfoot territory. The trappers had all taken positions in which they could compete with the British, and in doing so advance America’s holdings in the west.

When Smith emerged from the Mountains in late 1826 and descended to the Mexican settlements on the coast, he had taken the first step in establishing a new commercial network. Whether he realized it or not, he would soon help make American trade a global phenomenon, paving the way for his nation’s position as an economic powerhouse.³⁵ While Mexican authorities were detaining Smith, American ship captains helped translate in the exchanges between him and his captors. Because Smith was being detained for not having proper documentation stating his reason for being in California, Smith would be released if he obtained papers from the American sea captains. In Smith’s words, “If the Americans who were in the harbor of San Diego would sign a paper certifying that what I gave as the reason of my coming to that country to be substantially correct I might then have permission to trade for such things as I wanted.”³⁶ All of the American captains in the harbor signed the appropriate documentation, and Smith was released and ordered out of California. When Jedediah Smith was released and returned to the 1827 rendezvous, he shared news with the other trappers of possible overland trading opportunities to the Pacific. When Smith and his party returned once again to California, Governor Echeandia was outraged, but the Ship captains once again came to his side. This time, British trader William Hartnell helped Smith get out of his diplomatic predicament along with a number of other captains from all facets of the Pacific Maritime trade.³⁷ Once in San Francisco, Smith arranged for the sale of over 1500 pounds of beaver to the

Bluffs, Beavers, and Bullets:

The Explorations of Jedediah Smith and His Contributions Toward the Realization of Manifest Destiny

Franklin captained by John Bradshaw.³⁸ The sale of Smith's fur "constituted the golden movement in American Trade when one can pinpoint the lasting union of two major U.S trading networks."³⁹ For the first time, pelts collected inland by mountain men had reached a ship captain, thus linking Americas previously separate networks of trade. Smith had set a precedent, and subsequently, many other individuals began negotiating trade agreements between the Pacific and the interior.

Jedediah Smith had always been a proponent of nationalism and cultural supremacy. He entered the trade not only to make a profit for himself, but also to burgeon American claims in the region. During his excursions in the west, Jedediah Smith expanded American influence into the far reaches of the frontier. Because Smith was the first American to explore California, he shared much of what he learned at the annual fur rendezvous. Impressed with what they had heard, many fur traders and Mountain men also decided to travel to California, and dazzled by the regions resources and opportunity, many decided to remain in the territory. This led to a substantial American populace that began to take over commercial and industrial sectors in the region.⁴⁰ Eventually, Americans in California began to make the Mexican officials uneasy about their intentions. Hence, Smith helped to lay a foundation for a growing American influence in California that would eventually lead to its seizure by the United States.

Sir George Simpson, the Hudson Bay Company's chief executive in North America, had one major goal: to exclude the American trappers from the Oregon Country and its bountiful beaver. He believed that by keeping Americans outside of Oregon Country, the trappers would be prevented from establishing connections with U.S ships that visited the region. Simpson also concluded that the British would be able to secure much of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon, from the United States.⁴¹ The British attempted to create a "Fur Desert" in the Northwest; by eliminating beaver populations, they believed they could prevent American competition in the region. However, the HBC's strategy was not successful, as the American trappers refused to back down, and they slowly began to disassemble the HBC's domination in the Northwest. In 1824, Jedediah Smith first entered Oregon territory, and immediately encountered the British trappers, with whom they trapped in close proximity over the following weeks. Ogden, the leader of an HBC brigade was irate when he discovered that the entire Bear River area had been trapped over by the Americans. Likewise, a number of free trappers working under the HBC reported that "the whole country is run over by Americans."⁴² A growing problem for the British was the prospect that their free trappers would desert or sell their furs to the Americans, for they had grown frustrated with the HBC's low prices for beaver skins and high prices for goods. Gardner, a member of Ashley's trappers, walked into Ogden's camp waving an American flag and proclaiming that they were trespassing "In the United States Territory," and claiming that

the trappers contracts with the British had no force in U.S territory. After the confrontation, twenty four of Ogden's men deserted, further weakening the HBC's control of the area. Before the Americans arrived, desertion at such a scale would not have been possible.⁴³ When Smith, Jackson, and Sublette reconvened at the 1829 rendezvous at Pierre's Hole in Idaho, they shared their common experiences of the British threat, and were particularly angered by the Treaty of 1818. In a letter to Secretary of War John Eaton, they described their concerns, stating "The inequality of the convention with Great Britain in 1818 is most glaring and apparent, and its continuance is a great and manifest injury to the United States."⁴⁴ They added that the threat of a "British colony, and a military and naval station," would violate the treaty. Finally the men describe the easy passage of their wagons into the Northwest territory: "This is the first time that wagons ever went to the Rocky Mountains, and the ease and safety of which it was done prove the facility of communicating overland with the Pacific Ocean." They conclude the letter by urging, "the convention of 1818 should be terminated and each nation confined to its own territory."⁴⁵ The men had done their duty, and the future of American expansion now lay with President Jackson and the rest of the nation.

In 1831, Comanche warriors killed Jedediah Smith at the age of thirty-two while he was traveling on the Santa Fe Trail. By the time Smith had died, he was on the cusp of national fame. Before he left St. Louis, he mentioned that he had just completed a manuscript containing "All the information I have personally collected with all that was before known of our Western Territory," and that he had travelled "more than 10,000 miles"⁴⁶ in a span of nine years. Jedediah Smith endured countless hardships during his career in his quest to advance himself and his nation. Had Smith's adventures and maps been published before his death, he likely would have obtained fame similar to that of Lewis and Clark.⁴⁷ Jedediah Smith is seldom given enough credit for his contributions toward American success in the west. Because of Smith's untimely death, he was forgotten for about ninety years until attempts were made in the mid 1920s by his descendants and historians to publicize his accomplishments.⁴⁸ For example, an exhaustive research project was completed by Maurice Sullivan, who in the 1920s found the lost Journal of 1827-28 in the family of Benjamin Green Paddock Smith, Jedediah's younger brother. Yet even today, few people recognize his name. Jedediah Smith deserves a status equal to that of the most famous American explorers for his contributions toward the realization of Manifest Destiny.

Notes

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**Bluffs, Beavers, and Bullets:
The Explorations of Jedediah Smith and His Contributions Toward the Realization of Manifest Destiny**

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President's Message - Jim Smith, Helena, Montana



Apparently not a lot is known about the second Fur Trade Rendezvous at Cache Valley, Utah in 1826. A little more is known about the site of the 1827 Rendezvous at Bear Lake, Utah. In mid-May Milton von Damm and I decided to visit these two historic locations. Milton was on his way to the Antique Firearms Show in Denver, and figured he could lay over a day at Salt Lake City. We decided to meet up at Brigham City and set out from there for a day on the Jedediah Smith Trail.

There may have been two gatherings in 1826, at either end of the Bear River Valley as it flows a few miles west of Logan, Utah on its final leg to the Great Salt Lake. At the south end of the valley is Hyrum, Utah. This is where the famous cache of 75 beaver pelts was dug in 1825. Today it's the site of Hyrum State Park, on the East Fork of the Little Bear River. There's a new historic sign there that mentions Jedediah as well as a few of the other mountain men, and a telescope that is pointed at the creek bank where the cache was supposed to have been located.

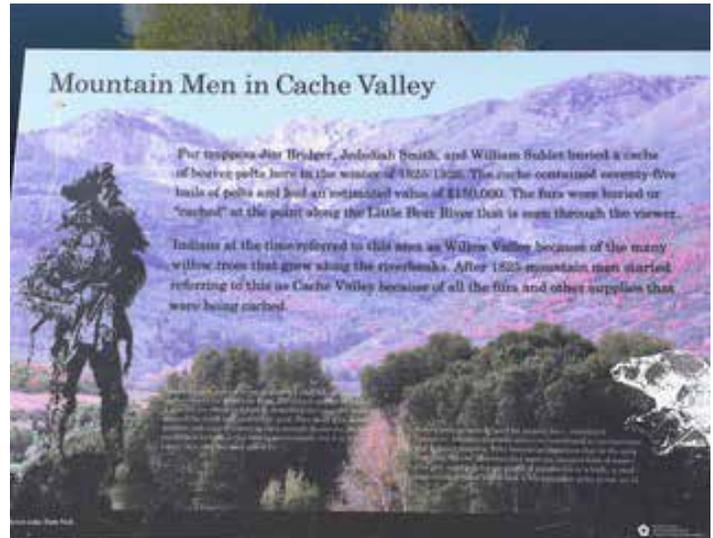
According to Fred Gowans in his 'Rocky Mountain Rendezvous,' (A History of the Fur Trade Rendezvous, 1825-1840) a second annual gathering may have been held at the north end of the valley, near Cove, Utah. Today



Milt von Damm peering through the telescope at the location of the cache placed in the creek bank by the Mountain Men in 1825. On the East Fork of the Little Bear River.

Cove is hardly more than a few houses and a green sign on state highway 91. In the summer of 1826, however, William Ashely and his new partner, Jedediah Smith, were coming up the Bear River Valley bringing the trade goods to the encampment at Hyrum, and a large contingent rode ahead to meet them near Cove to get the festivities underway a little early. Seeing the well kept farms in the valley today in little hamlets like Richmond, Lewiston, Wellsville and Smithfield it's hard to imagine a caravan of 300 horses and mules moving through the area, bringing supplies to the waiting whites and Indians. But on a spring day as the highway tops a rise and you get a view of the valley, one can easily imagine that very scene back in the day.

From the Bear River valley US highway 89 heads east up Logan Canyon, through the Cache National Forest and over to Bear Lake, a beautiful turquoise gem of a lake out of which flows the Bear River as it heads north. At the south end of the lake is Rendezvous Beach, presumably the site of the 1827 and 1828 Rendezvous.



Historic Marker at Hyrum State Park: Mountain Men in Cache Valley, site of the 1826 Rendezvous.



Jim Smith at Bear Lake, site of the 1827 and 1828 Rendezvous.

President's Message - *Continued*



Bear Lake at Rendezvous Beach.



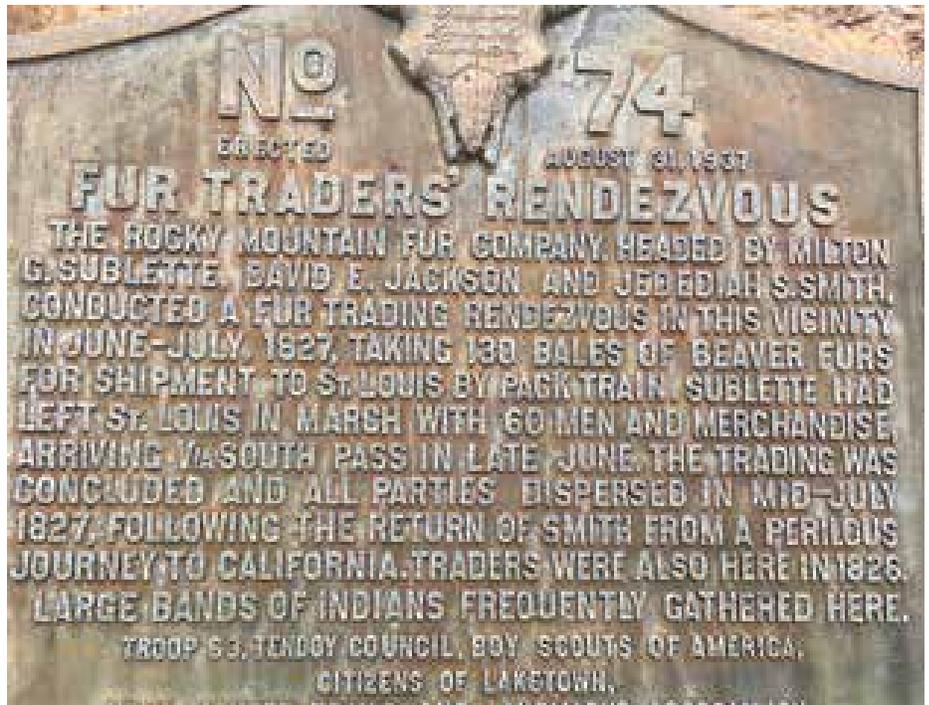
Rendezvous Beach State Park.

like to be at these places and walk this ground during the Fur Trade Era.

Milton and I had a great day seeing the country, speculating about the various places and routes and sites we visited. For me, anyway, this is the best part of being involved in the Jedediah Smith Society: getting to meet and visit with folks, like Milton, who share an interest in this great American explorer and his contemporaries in the Fur Trade Era. Over the years I've met the most interesting and vibrant people through the Society.

With that in mind please plan to join the Society at the 2018 Rendezvous, which will trace some of Jed's other significant travels in Utah and the Great Basin. This will be October 12-14. Please see the article in this issue of *Castor* for all the details.

Sincerely, Jim Smith
jim@smithandmcgowan.com



Fur Trade Historic Marker near Rendezvous Beach, erected by the Boy Scouts of America.

Jedediah S. Smith Wall Map and Interactive Web Maps

Please remember to go to our website: www.JedediahSmithSociety.org
to check out the interactive maps that have been created by our map team. They're unbelievable!

Also please consider purchasing a map for your wall.

They come in 2 sizes: 24" x 36" and 16" x 20". You may order the historic style or one with modern highways added. You will find the order sheet on-line with instructions.

Next Steps

A framed Wall Map will be presented to Jim Hardee and Clint Gilchrest of the Museum of the Mountain Man at the Green River Rendezvous July 12-14, 2018, Pinedale, Wyoming. In addition a framed map will be auctioned off to provide funding for the museum. Future plans include an interactive map placement at museums for visitors use.

Those That Knew Him

What they had to say about Jedediah Strong Smith's Character and Religious Convictions

Collected by Joe J. Molter

"...an expedition was in the fall of 1825 – fitted out, under the firm of Ashley & Smith, to go out and trade west of the Rocky Mountains. Jedediah Smith was Ashley's partner. He was a very efficient man. Smith led the expedition, which I joined..." Robert Campbell: Holloway, Drew Alan, *A Narrative of Colonel Robert Campbell's Experiences in the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade from 1825 to 1835*, (Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, WA. 1991) 17.

"Smith, a very intelligent person and who seemed to be the leading man among them." Alexander Ross, a Hudson's Bay Company employee and competitor: Ross, Alexander, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1956) 285.

"In reflecting on the character of Mr. Smith, when we recollect how and where, and in what company he had spent the last ten years of his life, we are filled with admiration and delight. There was none of the uncouth roughness of a hunter – he was gentle and affable. Exposed as he had been, a captain or chief of a party, in the lawless country, to many and great temptations, he held fast to his integrity; with his ears constantly filled with the language of the profane and dissolute, no evil communication proceeded out of his mouth. He was exact in his requisitions of duty, determined and persevering, always confident of success. When his party was in danger, Mr. Smith was always among the foremost to meet it, and the last to fly; those who saw him on shore, at the Riccaree fight, in 1823, can attest to the truth of this assertion. In all his dealings with the Indians, he was strictly honorable, and always endeavored to give them favorable ideas of the whites. He made it a sacred rule, never to molest them, except in defense of his own life and property, and those of his party. He was kind, obliging, and generous to a fault. Without being connected with any church, he was a Christian. The lone wilderness had been his place of meditation, and the mountain top his altar. He made religion an active, practical principle, from the duties of which nothing could seduce him. He affirmed it to be "the one thing needful," and his greatest happiness; yet was he modest, never obtrusive, charitable, without guile." Author unknown but believed to be the Editor of the following magazine, written the year after his death: *Captain Jedediah Strong Smith: A Eulogy of that Most Romantic and Pious of Mountain Men, First American by Land into California*, (Illinois Magazine, June 1832).

"Mr. Jedediah Smith a very intelligent and confidential young man who had charge of a small detachment...." William H. Ashley, 1825 – The Ashley Papers: Morgan, Dale L., *The West of William H. Ashley*, (The Old West Publishing Co., Denver, CO. 1964) 118.

"Mr. Smith a young man of our company made a powerful prayer which moved us all greatly and I am persuaded John died in peace." Letter written in June, 1823, by Hugh Glass to parents of John Gardner, who perished on Missouri River: Original letter in possession of South Dakota Historical Society, Box 3536A, Folder H75.14, State Achieves, SDSHS.

Besides, Smith was a religious man, and the coarse profanity of the mountaineers was very distasteful to him. "A very mild man, and Christian; and there were very few of them in the mountains," is the account given of him by the mountaineers themselves. Direct quote of Joseph L. Meek within: Victor, Frances Fuller, *The River of the West – The Adventures of Joe Meek*, Vol. 1, (Mountain Press Publishing Co., Missoula, 1983) 79. Originally published 1870.

Those That Knew Him *(continued)*

What they had to say about Jedediah Strong Smith's Character and Religious Convictions

Collected by Joe J. Molter

Jedediah Smith – “He bore a very high reputation for truth and veracity, and a gentleman.” Joe Meek, under oath: *Evidence for the United States in the matter of the Claim of the Hudson's Bay Company, Pending Before the British and American Joint Commission, for the Final Settlement of the Claims of the Hudson's Bay and Puget's Sound Agricultural Company*, (Vol. 8, Washington City, M'Gill & Witherow, 1867) 95.

“Smith was a bold, outspoken, professing and consistent Christian; the first and only one known among the early Rocky Mountain hunters and trappers. No one who knew him well doubted the sincerity of his piety. He had become a communicant of the Methodist Church before leaving his home in New York, and there are no doubt some Methodists yet living in the city of St. Louis who can call to mind the religious character and the liberality of Jedediah Smith, for when in the city he never failed to occupy his place in the church of his choice, while he gave generously to all objects connected with the religion he professed and loved. There could be no better character found on which to base a true and interesting book for Sunday schools or a religious romance; the tale of his life told through, would require no twisting or fixing up to fill its pages.” Waldo, William: *Glimpses of the Past – Recollections of a Septuagenarian*, (Missouri Historical Society, Vol. V, Numbers 4-6, April-June 1938) 87.

“Partly from the novelty of going to the mountains, and partly from the hope of further improvement in health I sought for this purpose an interview with Mr. Smith. Instead of finding a leather stocking I met a well-bred, intelligent and Christian gentleman, who repressed my youthful ardor and fancied pleasures for the life of a trapper and mountaineer by informing me that if I went into the Rocky Mountains the chances were much greater in favor of meeting death than of finding a restoration to health, and that if I escaped the former and secured the latter, the probabilities were that I would be ruined for anything else in life than such things as would be agreeable to the passions of a semi-savage. He said that he had spent about eight years in the mountains and should not return to them.” J.J. Warner: *Reminiscences of Early California from 1831 to 1846*, (Historical Society of Southern California, Vol. VII, 1906-07-08, Los Angeles, CA) 176.

“Professing conversion to Christianity at a very early age, he (Jedediah) united with the Methodist church, of which he remained a consistent and useful member till his death.” Smith, Ezra Delos (Jedediah's brother's grandson): *Jedediah S. Smith and the Settlement of Kansas*, (Kansas State Historical Society, Vol. 12, 1911-12) 254.

“A Mr. Smith, an intelligent young man, who was employed by general Ashley beyond the Rocky Mountains for two years, and who visited a British trading house , on the north fork of Lewis' river, last winter, informs me...” Brigadier General Henry Atkinson, Nov. 23, 1825 letter to Major General Jacob Brown: Morgan, Dale L., *The West of William H. Ashley*, (The Old West Publishing Co., Denver, CO. 1964) 139-140.

“If Mr. Smith be in all respects the exalted character you represent him to be, the business will & must under your united management, & the capital you speak of result advantageously.” Hugh Campbell, 09/18/1825 letter to his brother Robert: MacCulloch, Patrick C., *The Campbell Quest*, (Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, University of Missouri Press, 2006) 70.

“I must now mention honorable exceptions to the character of the men engaged at St. Louis being now thinned down to only nine of those who left in March and first, Jedediah Smith who was our Captain... .” Col. James Clyman's Narrative, Napa, April 17, 1871, in Charles L. Camp, *James Clyman Frontiersman*, (Champoeg Press, Portland, Oregon, 1960) 15.

Events

2018 RENDEZVOUS - UTAH REGISTER BY AUGUST 1, 2018

Jedediah referred to the Great Salt Lake as his “Home in the Wilderness.” Plan to join the Jedediah Smith Society this October 12-14 as we retrace his significant travels in the state of Utah. We’ll be ably led by Ms. Sheri Wysong, a Society member from Delta, Utah. Here are the highlights. For further information, and to Register for the Rendezvous please contact Jim Smith or Sheri Wysong before August 1, 2018.

YOU MUST BE REGISTERED (SIGNED UP) WITH THE JEDEDIAH SMITH SOCIETY IN ORDER TO ATTEND. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY. WE NEED TO KNOW WELL AHEAD OF TIME HOW MANY FOLKS ARE COMING TO THE 2018 RENDEZVOUS. THERE IS NO FEE FOR THE RENDEZVOUS ITSELF. FOLKS WILL BE ASKED TO SIGN A STANDARD WAIVER OF LIABILITY PRIOR TO SETTING OUT OCTOBER 13TH.

TO REGISTER PLEASE CONTACT:

Jim Smith
jim@smitandmcgowan.com
406-949-1002

Sheri Wysong
swsong@frontier.com
435-864-8392

Schedule & Itinerary.

Friday, October 12. Arrive Salt Lake City. Lodging at the Little America Hotel or the hotel of your choice. There are many hotels in downtown Salt Lake City and in American Fork.

Saturday, October 13. Meet Sheri Wysong in American Fork, about 30 miles south of Salt Lake City, by 8 am. Folks can leave their cars at their downtown Salt Lake City hotel, walk a few blocks to the North Temple Station, and take the 7 am Frontrunner Commuter Train to the American Fork Station. The closest hotel to the North Temple Frontrunner Station is the Hyatt Place Salt Lake City/ Downtown (801) 456-6300.

Or, folks can drive to American Fork Frontrunner Station. Parking available at the Station. There are also many hotels and motels in and around American Fork.

However, on the return Sunday we’ll end up back in Salt Lake City, not American Fork. Thus, the suggestion to leave cars in Salt Lake City and catch the Frontrunner at 7 am Saturday morning. Make arrangements with your hotel.

We’ll meet Sheri Wysong in American Fork at 8 am, have a brief orientation, and set out. We’ll be driving about 200 miles per day, with stops along the way both Saturday and Sunday.

We’ll drive to Fremont State Park, following Jed’s 1826 route. Arrive Fremont State Park at 12 noon. Lunch stop along the way. Depart Fremont SP at 3 pm, and drive to the Border Inn, in Baker, NV. Arrive at the Border Inn by 6 pm. Dinner on your own.

Sunday, October 14. Breakfast on your own. Pick up box lunch (if ordered in advance). Depart Baker, NV by 9 am. Follow Jed’s 1827 route from the Utah-Nevada border to the Great Salt Lake. Return to Salt Lake City by 5 pm. Drop folks off at their motels in Salt Lake City. Rendezvous concludes.

Lodging.

You must make your own hotel reservations.

Friday, October 12. The recommended Hotel in Salt Lake City is the Little America Hotel, 500 South Main St. Phone 801-596-5700. The Rate I (Jim Smith) received is \$123 per night. There are many hotel options in Salt Lake City.

Saturday, October 13. The Border Inn in Baker, NV. Phone 775-234-7300. The Rate for the Jedediah Smith Society group is \$75 per night. There is also an RV Park at the Border Inn.

Vehicles.

We’re planning to use our own private vehicles. If you have a high clearance outfit with tires capable of handling some rougher terrain, (4wd would also be ideal, but probably not necessary) and are willing to drive, please let Sheri or Jim know. We’ll be on some dirt roads Sunday, but they are all well maintained county roads. We’ll caravan all the way, and stay within sight of each other.

Events - *continued*

2018 RENDEZVOUS - CONTINUED

Weather.

We can expect warm days (50-60 degrees) and cool nights (40-50 degrees) in the Great Basin in October. But, you never know so be prepared for any type of weather. In addition to the items below, bring a goretex shell and a warm hat and gloves, just in case.

What to Bring.

Most of our time will be spent driving and sightseeing. We will not be spending a lot of time hiking or walking off the beaten path. But, please bring sturdy footwear. Also, a sweater or down vest in addition to a Fall jacket. Bring a small pack. Bring sunscreen, insect repellent, sunglasses, and a hat with a good, wide brim. Jim &/or Sheri will have a first aid kit.

Our vehicles will have coolers with bottled water and light snacks. Bring anything else you'd like, and we'll add those drinks to the coolers.

Meals.

Most of the time we'll be on our own for meals. Breakfast on your own Saturday morning prior to departure from American Fork. We'll stop along the way to Fremont State Park to pick up Lunch at Subway to take to the Park. Dinner on your own Saturday evening at the Border Inn. Breakfast on your own Sunday morning at the Border Inn. You can order a box lunch for Sunday from the Border Inn. You can do this when you Register for the Rendezvous with Jim or Sheri.

Recommended Reading.

Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West. By Dale Morgan.

The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith. By George R. Brooks.

The Song of Jed Smith. Part of the Cycle of the West Trilogy: The Mountain Men. By John G. Neihardt.

FUR TRADE SYMPOSIUM 2018



— Save the Date —
2018 Fur Trade Symposium
“Old Forts Never Die”
The Middle Missouri Fur Trade, 1790-1860
September 26-29, 2018 • Bismarck, ND

OREGON CALIFORNIA TRAIL ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CONVENTION 2018

August 6-10, 2018
Ogden, Utah

Rails and Trails: speakers, field trips, activity workshops, focusing on Native American History; Earliest Crossroads of the West, Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, Mountain Men, Explorers and emigrants prior to 1847. Four bus tours to see, Bidwell/Bartelson route, The Transcontinental Route, Echo and Weber Canyons used by Native Americans; Explorers and mountain men; Bear River Massacre.

Material Culture of the Far Western Fur Trade in the 1820's

By Milton von Damm

The following short article is the first of a series about the material culture of the far western fur trade in the 1820's. Future articles will feature pictures and information about traps, trade goods carried by Jedediah Smith, tools, knives, and personal items of mountain men.

Guns of the Far Western Fur Trade Period

There was no uniformity to the guns used by trappers when they first began to travel to the Rocky Mountains. Trappers who were also the best hunters soon learned to favor a large caliber rifles with a sturdy stock to deliver the shocking power to bring down large game such as buffalo, grizzly bear and elk, and survive the wear and tear of the wilderness. Trappers and camp workers who brought their personal weapons brought whatever they owned, fowlers, military muskets, smaller bore rifles, and Indian Northwest fusils. They were all flintlock.

By the end of the 1820's, the specification for a fur trade long arm was a rifle weighing nine and a half to ten and a half pounds, with a forty two to forty four inch barrel, having from forty eight to fifty or larger caliber, a checkered grip, a stock of maple or "sugar tree" and a thumb piece insert.

Not much information is available about the guns ordered by General Ashley for his men. Ashley stocked rifles that could be purchased on a credit on wages or furs. He refers to getting guns east of the Appalachian Mountains and he sent letters during buying trips from Lancaster, PA. In the 1820's it is likely that rifles came from Lancaster makers and probably Henry Derringer in Philadelphia.

Hawken rifles were only involved later in the Rocky Mountain fur trade. Although they had shops in St. Louis during the 1820's, they did not make commercial rifles during the flintlock period. Ashley did have business relations with them, but probably to make metal items such as traps, horseshoes, tools and perhaps gun repair work.

Phillip Creamer made guns of the highest quality and is mentioned because Jedediah Smith purchased a pair of percussion pistols and a rifle when he retired from the mountains in 1830. General Ashley and Robert Campbell acquired the expensive Creamer rifles after they became wealthy.

Early Far West Fur Trade Types

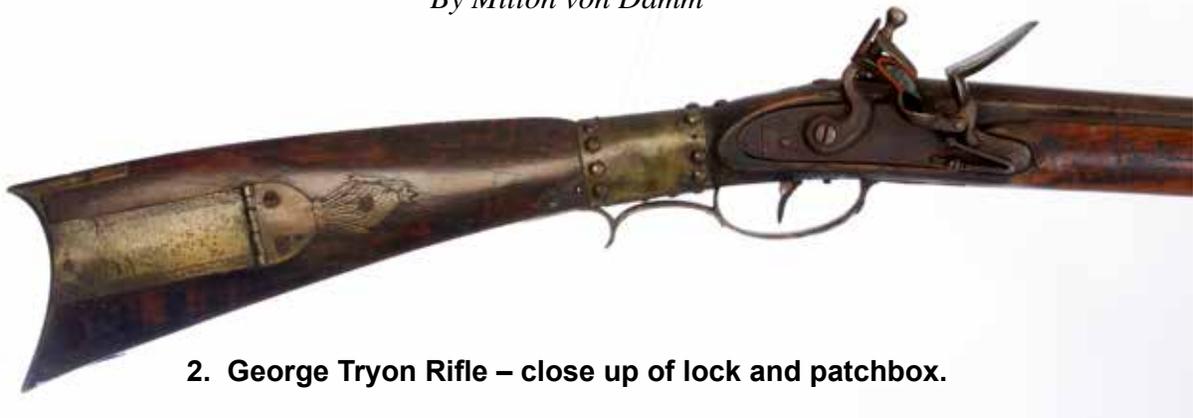
Here are two examples of flintlock rifles that could have been used by General Ashley or Smith, Jackson and Sublette's men. The first rifle was made by George Tryon and has a lock made by J Henry. They started a cooperative working relationship in 1818. This is a gun that could have been a personal arm of a member of an early fur trade party. This gun has a forty five inch barrel, weighs ten and a half pounds, and is .38 caliber. The pineapple finial patchbox suggests its Philadelphia origins, but its slender stock and small caliber would have limited its usefulness.



1. George Tryon Rifle – full length view.

Material Culture of the Far Western Fur Trade in the 1820's (*continued*)

By Milton von Damm

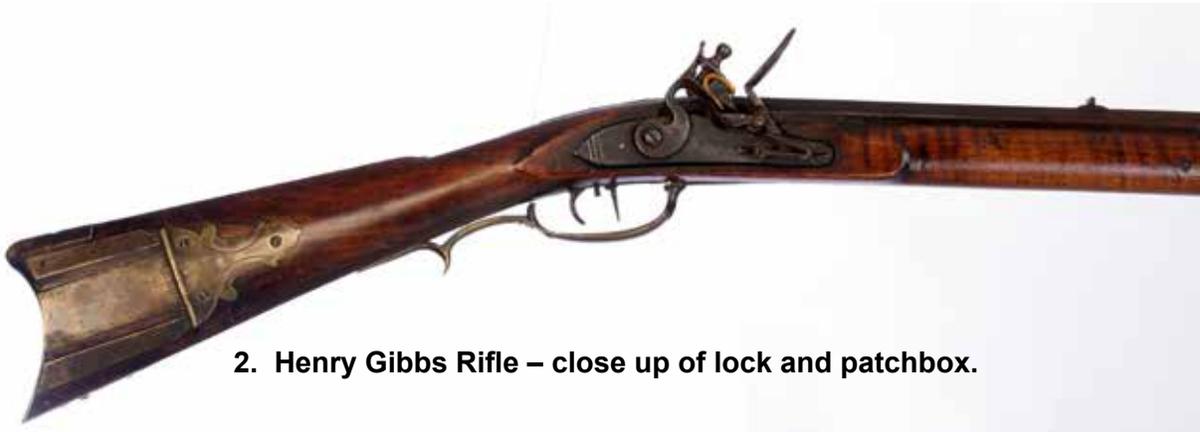


2. George Tryon Rifle – close up of lock and patchbox.

The second rifle was made by Henry Gibbs. It has a shorter forty inch barrel, a larger caliber of .54, weighs nine and a half pounds, and has the Trivium finial patchbox which was common in early fur trade rifles made in Lancaster. It features an iron extension to its tang along the top of the stock's wrist to reinforce its strength.



1. Henry Gibbs Rifle – full length view.



2. Henry Gibbs Rifle – close up of lock and patchbox.



3. Henry Gibbs Rifle – close up of extended tang.

JSS Positions Available - We Need You!

Newsletter Editor

We need someone to be the new editor for our "Castor Canadensis".

This person would work closely with Irene Steiner of Soler Graphics to continue the quality product that our members have come to expect.

The job entails gathering feature articles and pictures for the newsletter from our own members and other sources, as well as emailing them to Irene for layout as well as helping to proof the final product.

Castor Canadensis is produced quarterly.

Please contact President Jim Smith if you think you can help us out!

jim@smithandmcgowan.com

Events Director

We have a new position

"Events Director"

which will plan and execute the Rendezvous each year.

Planning the event, obtaining speakers, coordinating lunch if needed, program bulletins are all part of the position. If you have an interest/experience in this area please contact

Jim Smith, President at jim@smithandmcgowan.com

You do not necessarily need to live in California.

Members' Book Corner

This space is for YOU (members) to give informal reviews of books you have read and enjoyed.

What are you reading?

If you have a book that you would like to recommend to other JSS members, please send your info by email to Paige or Steve Mair at pfrend1@yahoo.com. You can follow the format: title, author, publisher, why I read this book, a short review of the book, and why other members might be interested.

Book: Contested Empire

Author: John Phillip Reid

Publisher: University of Oklahoma Press (2002)

I picked this book up at the Oregon State Historical Society while on a recent trip to Portland. I was interested in it because while I have read a lot about the fur trade, I have not read about the specific exploits of Peter Ogden. Professor Reid is Professor Emeritus of New York University Law School, with an emphasis on American legal history. For a retired lawyer (which I am) with an interest in the fur trade era, I found this book to be a treasure. In telling the story of Peter Ogden, Prof. Reid not only gives the details of Ogden's various Snake River Expeditions but he also describes the various legal relationships between the trappers and the Hudson's Bay Company and the interest, if any, the HBC had in the trappers' equipment, horses

and beaver pelts prior to their sale to the HBC. As a result, the author's retelling of how various trappers deserted from one of Ogden's expeditions is much more nuanced than the usual view from the HBC's perspective that the American's "stole" their property. Prof. Reid also delves into what Ogden and Gardner Johnson probably understood about where they were at the time and what the law would have been controlling in that locale. This is just one of the many interesting details given in the book.

I found his scholarship to be excellent as he refers to and quotes from the correspondence of John McLoughlin and George Simpson, as well as the journals of Peter Ogden and others. Some parts of the book may be a bit dense to get through, but it is worth it and I highly recommend the book.

Steve Mair, Sacramento/Sutter Creek

Members' Section

New Member

Please welcome our new members to the Society. We welcome you to our events and participation in various committees. If you like to write articles please see the guidelines under the editor column.

Peter G. Meyerhof Sonoma, CA

Donor List

The Society wishes to thank the sponsors and patrons and all members for the investment in the future of our society.

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Thank you

Award of Recognition

The Jedediah Smith Society is pleased to announce that one its long time members, **Joe Molter** from Redding, California, was selected to receive an Award of Merit by the Conference of California Historical Societies. The award recognizes Joe's work over the last 20 plus years to preserve the legacy of Jedediah Smith in the state of California. Joe will be honored at the CCHS Awards Luncheon, June 23rd in Burbank. Ms. Theresa Melbar, from Bakersfield, is a CCHS member and the person who first suggested that Joe's name be submitted for consideration. Theresa and Joe have worked on the relocation of a Jedediah Smith Historical Marker in Kern county. Milton von Damm and Jim Smith submitted letters of support for Joe's nomination.



When notified of winning this award, Joe was totally surprise and humbled. He wanted to thank God for giving him the interest in history, thanks to his mother who nurtured that interest and thanks to his wife who has tolerated and supported him throughout their 51 years of marriage in the attendance of multiple history symposiums, the many stops made at historic points of interests and museums and the many hours spent in historic research. Also thanks go to this Society for its nomination for this award and their support.

In Memoriam

In memory of Lillian A. Smith, who was related to Israel Smith, Jedediah's grandfather's brother, recently passed away at the age of 92. She contributed an article to the 1969 Pacific Historian which we recently reprinted in our 2016/17 Castor. She also participated in the 1999 Jedediah Smith Society Celebration. The society extends their sympathies to her family.

Your Officers & Board Members

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Jim@smithandmcgowan.com
406-949-1002

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Jeff Bush

Jessica Bush

John Felt

Ed Sieckert

Loretta Smith Buxton

Marlene-Smith-Baranzini

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.

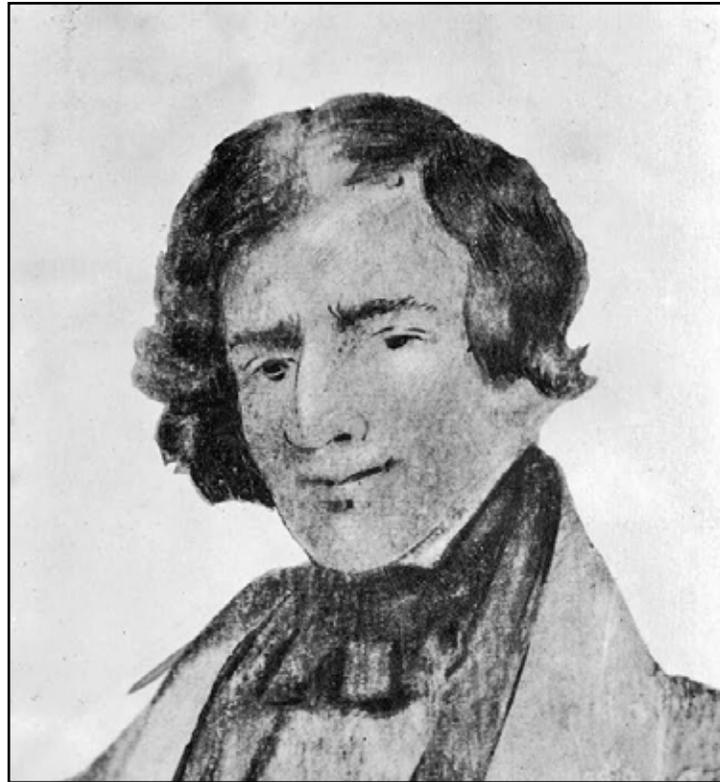
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See website: www.jedediahsmithsociety.org Go to Membership then click "Application"



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