



# CASTOR CANADENSIS

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

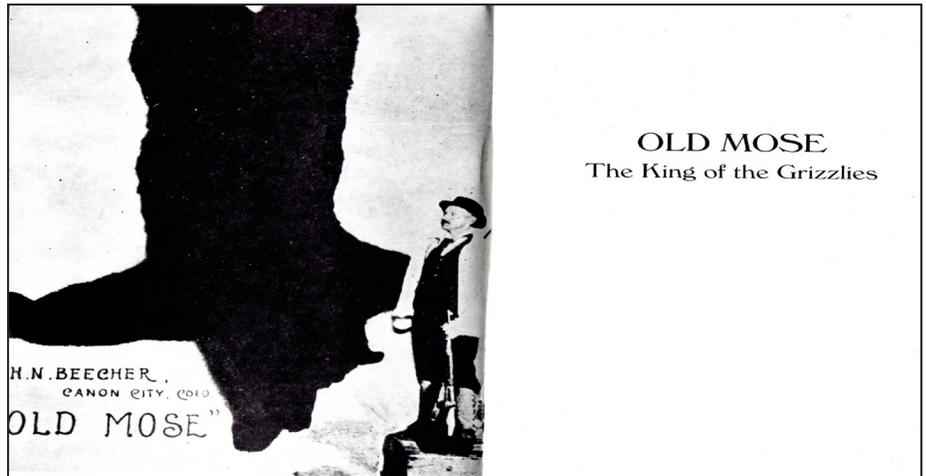
WINTER 2022

## Jedediah Smith's First Far-Western Expedition

By Charles L. Camp

*The story of the silver-tip is as real as war history. Whereas, Mountain Man stories are mostly that of lore filled with fiction with intention to sell copythaof glory are mostly fiction aimed to sell copy.*

*There is no myth about Jedediah Smith's courage when he stepped out in front of a charging white bear. Damm fool was he, yet the truth is he took one for the Team and got his head torn off in the process. Like Smith, James Clyman was a man amongst men. He like Smith was a man of actions and deeds, not words and saying. His description of the Smith Grizzly Bear attack, the only one for that matter, is truthful. What Smith did, stepping out of line to take that hit, was like a 150 lb punt returner getting trucked by a 600 lb lineman charging at full speed which in this case was 30 mph for a grizzly. Much faster than any human to ever walk and talk. Typical of Mountain Man stories, Smith stories of grizzlies evolved like the story of Old Mose, which was mostly fiction like many fur trade stories. There is more to follow herein on Old Mose and grizzly bears, but first to follow is the true story of the grizzly bear attack on Jedediah Smith.— (Editor)*



Fake photograph of Old Mose made for national audience

The Black Hills of South Dakota and the uplands of eastern Wyoming should preserve some remnants of the old trapper trails where Jedediah Smith, the famous explorer, led his band of mountain men in 1823. They were the first white men on record to enter the southern Black Hills. Our knowledge of their doings is limited to two imperfect accounts: the very brief “Solitaire” article in the Saint Louis *Weekly Reveille*, March 1, 1847, and James Clyman’s reminiscences printed in the *Napa Weekly Reporter*, March 30 to May 11, 1872.<sup>1</sup>

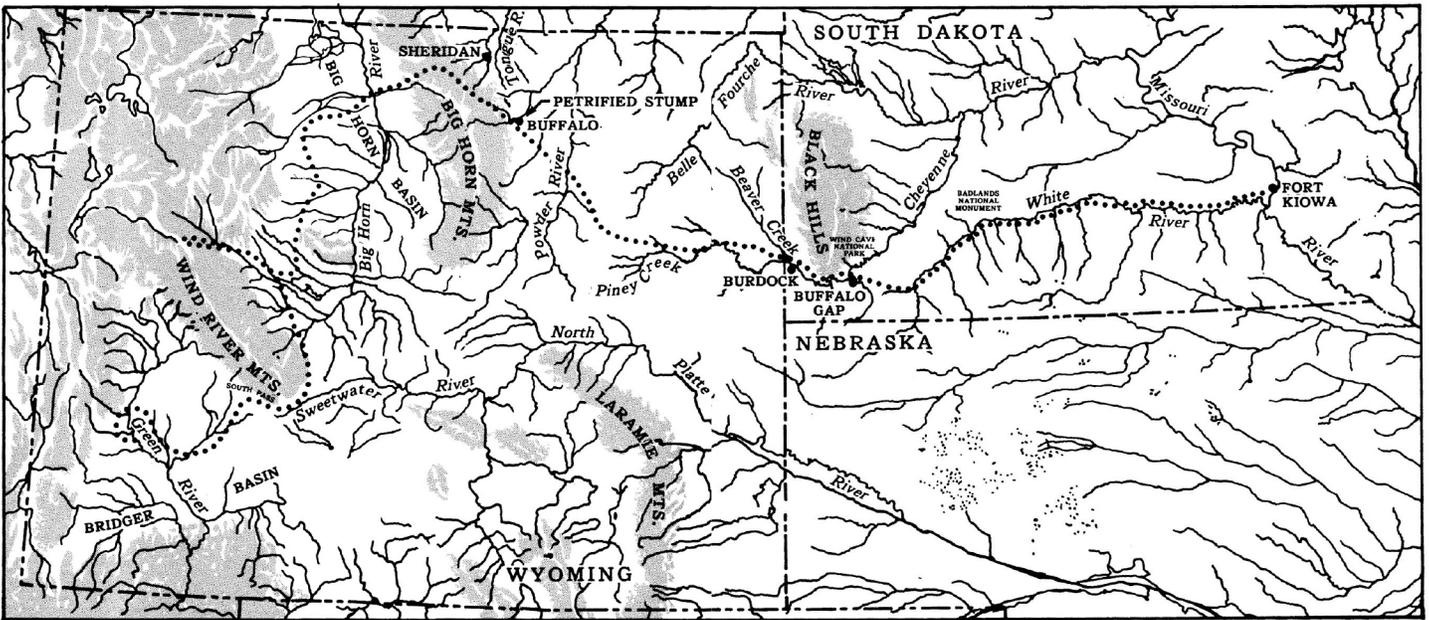
I have attempted to follow the Clyman-Smith trail, on the ground, so far as possible. Seventeen years ago we crossed the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming to track down the fossil forest and the tall petrified stump Clyman discovered and described. Eight years later we made a brief visit to the Black Hills and in 1968, with the generous assistance of Drs. Reid Macdonald, John Harksen, and Edwin Oshier, we traveled by jeep for a week through the southern Black Hills and eastern Wyoming. The summer of 1970 saw us in the Powder River basin.

Our hope was to identify the narrow canyon where the main Smith party was trapped overnight and to find the ridge where they traveled westward across the arid plains of eastern Wyoming. We

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were encouraged to think that we might be able to locate the “brushy bottom” where Jed Smith was literally half-scalped by a grizzly bear. Before going into all this, however, a bit of the regional history should be reviewed.

French explorers, the Vérendryes, were the first known white men to enter the vicinity of the Black Hills. Their date was the mid-1700s, and much speculation and doubt have ensued as to just where they went. They may have seen the snow shining on the distant summits of the Big Horns, but more likely they approached the bare granite crests of the Black Hills. In any event, they deposited a lead memorial plaque near present Pierre, South Dakota.

In 1804 Loisel identified the *Costa Nigra*, or Black Hills, as “a name which was doubtless given to those mountains because of the color of the earth,” which indicates that Monsieur Loisel had never been very close to those hills.<sup>2</sup> Jean Valle told Lewis and Clark that he had spent the winter of 1803-4 “three hundred leagues up the Cheyenne River in the Black Hills.” The distance is far too great to be credited, and nothing more can be said about this lone Frenchman.

Trappers operated in the vicinity of the Black Hills from the time of Manuel Lisa in 1809 and the Astorians in 1811, but actual penetration of the hills is not recorded. This brings us down to the time of Jedediah S. Smith and his first expedition, organized by Gen. William H. Ashley.<sup>3</sup>

William Henry Ashley, most persevering of men, outfitted and led two venturesome voyages far up the Missouri in 1822 and 1823. One of his keel boats met disaster early when it capsized at the mouth of Sniabar Creek in Missouri. Ashley’s expedition of 1823 also met disaster when the Arikara killed or wounded fifteen men and all of his horses. Salvaging this expedition was a notable feat. Most of Ashley’s boatmen had been fished out of grog shops in Saint Louis, and many of

them rebelled after the Arikara fight and refused to go on up the dangerous river. Ashley had to release one of his precious boats to ship thirty-eight of these deserters back to Council Bluffs. With these were five wounded men, which still further reduced the effectiveness of the expedition.

With his forces so badly weakened, lacking horses for overland travel, and unable to continue upriver by boat, Ashley was forced to improvise. He was determined to pursue his trapping and trading ventures into the mountains. Misadventures and disasters to other fur companies had opened the upper Missouri country freely to him if he could only put his trappers back into that region. Enough pack horses were secured to start Andrew Henry’s party away toward the Yellowstone. The men had to walk. Hugh Glass, one of these, was almost fatally chewed up by a bear. Others met with accidents or were killed by Indians.

A second overland party of at least eleven, perhaps as many as seventeen, hardy volunteers was sent out from Fort Kiowa with meager equipment and untrained horses, skittish and restive under packs. This makeshift outfit was under the charge of twenty-four-year-old Jedediah Smith, who had satisfied Ashley with his energy, courage, and leadership the previous year. Fort Kiowa, farthest outpost of the “French Fur Company,” the Chouteau fi had been established the previous year above the right bank of the Missouri near what is now Chamberlain, South Dakota. Horses there were in short supply, and Ashley could borrow only enough to transport Smith’s beaver traps, ammunition, camp outfit robes, blankets, and trade goods. The men had to walk and, worse yet, lead and control their balky horses.

Thus, inauspiciously and precariously began what soon evolved into one of the most extended and important explorations of the West. These two Ashley overland

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parties were the beginnings of ventures extending far across mountains, rivers, and deserts to the shores of the Pacific in California and Oregon during the next fifty years.

Smith, an eastern farm boy born in New York State and lately from a farm in Ohio, had not yet been well exposed to the rough-and-tumble life of the wilderness. The same could be said of most of his men, some of whom were destined to become notable figures on the frontier. There was Thomas Fitzpatrick, a durable, freckle-faced Irishman at the beginning of a long career and a charmed sort of life among the Indians and grizzly bears. There was William L. Sublette, scion of a frontier family, soon to become famous in his own right. There was the young frontiersman, James Clyman, who many years later wrote the story of the expedition. There was that mysterious, inseparable pair, S. Stone and Alexander K. Branch, later to join the Bent's Fort and Ceran St. Vrain crowd. A few years later (1826-28) Stone and Branch joined Ewing Young, "Dutch" George Yount, and the Patties in New Mexico and Arizona. They were all stout men whose hair-raising adventures and activities became significant in the opening of the West.

Standing out even in this company was Jedediah Smith, America's prime explorer after Lewis and Clark. He was the first Anglo-American to find his way to California directly overland, the first to surmount the snowbound heights of the Sierra Nevada, the first to traverse the length and breadth of Utah and to cross central Nevada, the first to find his way overland through the densely forested northwest coast of California into Oregon. Earlier he had led the first westward party through the great South Pass, and he was among the first American trappers to exploit successfully the rich beaver streams of the upper Colorado River basin. In a career of only nine years he was responsible more than any other man for the opening of the central route to the Far West. In contrast to the great federal expeditions, he was often forced to travel with the most meager preparation and equipment. Disaster dogged his steps, but he persisted to set his footsteps over much of the American West.

Jedediah Smith met an untimely death at the hands of the Comanche in southwestern Kansas in 1831. His records, except for a few important letters, were scattered and lost for a hundred years and more. The manuscript maps he constructed have disappeared. Fortunately, a copy remains of one of them, made by George Gibbs, about 1850, and sketched on a Fremont map of 1845. The David Burr map of 1839 contains information necessarily taken from a Smith manuscript map. The same could be said of other maps of the period, particularly those by Tanner and Gallatin. Harrison Dale in his *Ashley-Smith Explorations* drew attention to Smith's importance and printed some of his records. Maurice Sullivan, as late as 1934, after an extraordinary sleuthing effort among the scattered Smith clan, recovered and published hitherto

unknown journals and other documents. Finally, the late Dale L. Morgan of the Bancroft Library, with his comprehensive knowledge of fur trade history, provided the most complete account of Jedediah Smith's remarkable career.

The Clyman "Narrative" of 1871, written forty-eight years after the event by an eighty-year-old man, may be afflicted with some lapses of memory. Yet this is the best available record of Smith's first overland expedition. It contains the only eyewitness story of how Smith was halfscalped by a grizzly and is regarded as one of the classic narratives of western history.

Clyman, in his terse way, describes the features of the country traversed, from the Missouri River, through the Black Hills, across eastern Wyoming, over the Big Horn Mountains to Wind River and on across South Pass to Green River. The look of the land along their line of march remains today much as it was 150 years ago, though some of the smaller streams have disappeared, diverted into stock ponds, and browsing animals have no doubt reduced the number of wild chokecherries and other growth.

They bought and borrowed a few horses at Fort Kiowa. Horses were scarce there, as reported by a notable visitor, Prince Paul of Württemberg, only a month before. So everyone had to walk leading the stubborn pack animals. They had only a half-day's travel to reach the river. As Clyman says, they left Fort Kiowa: <sup>4</sup>

about the last of September [1823] and proceeded westward over a dry rolling highland ... in [the] evening we camped on White clay Creek [White River] a small stream running thick with a white sediment and resembling cream in appearance but of a sweetish pu[n]gent taste our guide warned us from using this water too freely as [it] caused excessive costiveness which we soon found out

To reach White River from Fort Kiowa they would have gone southwestward, not "westward." It might be thought that they went up Medicine Creek or Bad River rather than the White. There are two good reasons why this cannot be so: The Gibbs copy of Smith's map delineates their route along the north side of White River; and Clyman himself, in 1840, mentioned his "passage from the headwaters of White River of the Missouri to the Shiann River."

After a day or two on the trail the guide told them they would attempt a cutoff to avoid a large bend in the river, a route on which they would experience "two days of thirst and Starvation." Clyman tells the whole story: <sup>5</sup>

We proceeded up this stream one day [Trees] not in sight since we left the Missourie part of the nxt day same when our guide [from the French Fur Company?] infomed us to take what water we could as we would not

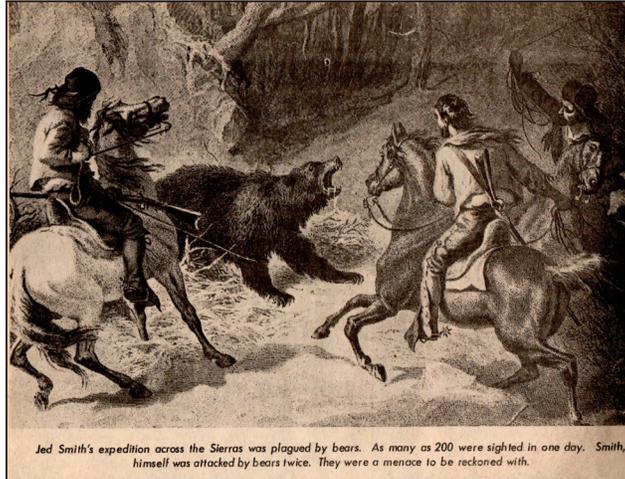
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reach water untill about noon the next day our means of taking water being verry small <sup>6</sup> we trailed on untill dark and camped on a ridge whare the cactus was so thick that we could scarcely find room to spred our Blankets <sup>7</sup> Starting early about 11 oclock we arived at our expected water But behold it was entirely dry not even dam[p] mud to be found but here we found a few Shrubby oaks to protect us from the scorching sun We rested perhaps half an hour 15 miles to the water yet and being all on foot and a pack horse to leade can we if we hold out reach it before dark we urged and hauled our stubron horses along as fast as possible our guide getting a long way ahead and find out of sight my pack horse being more tractab[l]e than most others I soon got ahead of my companions and we got strung out a mile in (tingth) [length] the country some what roling and one steering off to the right or left in search of water we ware not onley long but wide and it appeared like we might never all collect together again I followed as near as possible the last appeance of our guide but deveating slightly to the right struck on a hole [of] water about an hour before sunset I find my gun immedeatly and then ran into the pool arm deep my horse foloing me

Comeing out I fired my gun again one man and horse made their appearance the horse out ran the man plunging into the water first each man as he came fired his gun and Shouted as soon as he could moisten his mouth and throat Sufficiency to mak a noise about dark we all got collected except two who had given out and ware left buried in the sand all but their heads Capt Smith Being the last who was able to walk and he took Some water and rode about 2 miles back bringing up the exhausted men which he had buried in the sand and this two days of thirst and Starvation was made to cross a large bend of the white clay River in the morning we found it yet 4 or 5 miles to the [White] river whare our guide [was] waiting for us I have been thus particular in describing the means and trobles of traveling in a barren and unknown region here our River is a beautiful Clare stream running over a gravelly bottom with some timber along its course having [emerged] from its bed of mud and ashes for the sediment spoken of is nearer it mouth

The White River, a permanent stream along its entire course, furnished the trappers with distasteful though necessary water for 150 miles westward. The stream in its final 120 miles runs

milky white, heavy with sediment in suspension. It is barely drinkable unless allowed to settle for several hours (the fine white clay will eventually fall to the bottom of a container, leaving less than one-fourth of the volume of clear water at the top). The river in its lower reaches is saturated with this white mud, which is also deposited along its banks during high water. The mud comes mainly from the soft white clay beds of the Brule and Chadron formations, as well as from other badland exposures in the Pine Ridge Reservation.



Jed Smith's expedition across the Sierras was plagued by bears. As many as 200 were sighted in one day. Smith, himself was attacked by bears twice. They were a menace to be reckoned with.

Badlands farther down the river in the present Badlands National Monument also contribute their share of mud.

West of Cedar Pass in the big badlands the river becomes clear, or nearly so, in times of low water. This occurs after the summer rains are over. The upper river is a small, shallow stream running over a gravelly bottom where Porcupine Creek enters. It is fordable without the slightest trouble, except in time of flood.

So far, Clyman's description

agrees well with present conditions, and there can be no doubt that the party went up White River.

The bend mentioned in the passage would have been at least thirty miles across to require two days of travel. The puzzle is: *There is no such bend within two days' march of Fort Kiowa.* There is a shallow bend about sixty miles upstream. It would seem foolish to attempt to bypass even this one just to save some five or six miles of travel. Possibly Clyman forgot how far along the river they had gone when they took the cutoff. There is a northward bend of about thirty miles between Little White River and Pass Creek (south of Murdo to south of Kadoka). This is a possibility. There is another broad bend south of Cedar Pass. Clyman says that when they came out of the cutoff the river was a clear stream running over a gravelly bottom. This is so, at low water, near the mouth of Porcupine Creek where the Scenic-Rockyford road now crosses on a bridge.

Clyman discovered the water hole that saved the party from disaster. The water may have been a pool in the otherwise dry bed of Pass Creek, and the dry water hole encountered earlier may then have been in the bed of Black Pipe Creek. This is speculative.

Something is peculiar. Could it be that their guide indulged in a bit of treachery, trying to discourage them at the start of their long journey? Why was it necessary to camp on a bed of prickly pear cactus? Why were they led to a bone-dry water hole which could not have contained a trace of moisture at

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this time of year? Why did the guide sprint on ahead to leave his followers scattered out fanwise behind him rather than together as they should have been? Again, why did it remain for Clyman, rather than the guide who was on ahead, to find the water hole that evidently saved their lives? From all this it might be inferred that the guide was deliberately misleading them. Possibly he did not relish the idea of going 160 miles up to the Sioux country and then returning all that way alone.

A more charitable interpretation would be that the guide, Indianwise, wished to travel a direct route rather than walk a few miles farther along the river. He had not reckoned on a dry water hole. By the time they reached the next water, fifteen miles away, they were hot, famished, and exhausted. It may have been Smith himself who buried the two men in the attempt to conserve the moisture in their bodies. The guide had gone on ahead out of reach, so he could scarcely have done this himself. Smith used this trick again in 1827 to save one of his men in the desert of western Utah.

They met the Bois Brulé Sioux, traded for horses and secured "27 or 28." Here, presumably eight or ten miles north of present Oglala, in the southwest corner of South Dakota, they "crossed" the White River, having been traveling for a while at least, on its south side. This was their final view of that stream. Here, also, their guide left them to return to Fort Kiowa with the horses borrowed from the French Fur Company.

In his 1840 "Memorandum" Clyman says: <sup>8</sup>

In our passage from the headwaters of White River of the Missouri to the Shiann River we passed over a high and most singular Tract of country of about 15 or 20 miles from East to west how far it extends N. & S. I cannot tell it is almost Completely bear of vegetation nothing growing except here and there a stunted prickley pair the soil beng of a mast loose sterrile nature possible and the appearance extremely singular it having been all carried away by the thawing of the snows and shows of rain in to ravines of extreme depth leaving the plain verry uneven ...

And standing full of rounded conical hillocks of pyramidal form some large at the Base and upwards 100 ft hig and all sizes from that down to ordinary hillocks not more [than] three feet high From its present Shape I would Judge that at about the depth of 50 feet below the common surface of the earth the top being carried away to that depth from some cause or other perhaps from a greate accumilation of moisture a slight formation of sand stone occurs which shields the tops of all the larger mounds and from which cause retain their present elevation the earth being of all shades from leight gray to a dark brown an becomes remarkably easily saturated on the surface Mixing in large Quantities with the water the water where filled

with earth has a sweet taste causing those that are under the necesity [of] using it to be remarkable costive

Exactly! They were now headed northwestward toward the outer ridges of the Black Hills, dim and dark in the distance. The Ogalala Sioux provided them with "a few more horses," and "we swaped off some of our more ordinary," says Clyman.<sup>9</sup> They also found buffalo on these prairies and short grass for their horses.

Along this route they passed outlying badland "teepee" buttes and "cobble mounds of a regular taper from top to bottom all of them of the percise same angle and the tops sharp," as Clyman describes them.<sup>10</sup> They crossed the South Fork of



**Cheyenne River - Riparian Ecosystem similar to Powder River Basin**

Cheyenne River "a few miles below whare it leaves the Black Hill range of Mountains here some aluvial lands" looked "like they might bear cultivation," as indeed they are cultivated in broad green fields today.

Ahead rose the abrupt outer rim or hogback of the Black Hills. A deep notch in this rim would certainly have been noticed when they were still far away. They would perceive that by entering this gap, Buffalo Gap, they would have far easier access than by climbing up over the hogback. Another gap to the south, Fall River Gap, would not have been so readily seen had they taken that more unlikely route, and the peculiarly warm water in Fall River would doubtless have been mentioned, as well as the hot springs along the river.

After crossing the Cheyenne, a shallow stream, a drizzly rain came down, and the horses had some trouble with the gray mud of the country balling up on their hooves. This is a distressing feature of the blue-gray Pierre Shale beds lying to the southeast of Buffalo Gap. Following up Beaver Creek they would have made their way through the gap into a totally new kind of country: "a pleasant undulating pine Region cool and refreshing so different from the hot dusty planes we have been so long passing over and here we found hazlenuts and ripe plums a luxury not expected."<sup>11</sup> These were luxuries obtainable in the vicinity of Buffalo Gap, but not very much farther north into the higher hills.

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They continued to ascend toward the main divide, into the uplands, over open grassy hills perhaps as far as the southern end of present-day Wind Cave National Park. Here the landscape is still preserved in its pristine state. The dark forests of small ponderosa pines surround open pastures where antelope, elk, and bison roam. Prairie dogs in their villages chirp saucily at the wandering coyotes.

A little to the west of this rising ground, the country becomes brushy, with scrub pine and juniper, the latter "covered in purple berries" in October. To the north the forest becomes thicker. Rock cliffs and deep ravines prevent easy travel. We can well imagine Smith's party choosing the open glades and passageways through the forest. Present Pleasant Valley would provide such an avenue. Following this avenue through the woods southwest of Pringle would have led them along a small stream upon which they no doubt hoped to camp at nightfall. This stream led them into a box canyon. Let Clyman continue his story: <sup>12</sup>

one evening late gowing d[o]wn a small stream we came into a Kenyon and pushed ourselves down so far that (that) our horses had no room to turn while looking for a way out it became dark by unpacking and leading our animals down over Slipery rocks three of us got down to a n[i]ce open glade whare we killed a Buffaloe and fared Sumpiously that night while the rest of the Company remained in the Kenyon without room to lie down

Is it possible to identify this canyon? Mrs. E. J. Shriner, who lives on a ranch in Pleasant Valley, tells us that Hell Canyon is too easily traversed to qualify. She has ridden horseback and driven cattle through this canyon. The walls of Hell Canyon nevertheless are so steep that in most places it would be impossible to take a horse out up the sides. The same applies to Pass Creek Canyon, which is much shorter than Hell Canyon and can be traversed even more easily.

Red Canyon is a different story. This gorge heads at the Pleasant Valley Ranch, marked on topographic maps as Richmond Farm. The canyon walls close in just south of the present ranch buildings. The stream bed entering the canyon is now dry. Francis Conlon, who owns the ranch at the mouth of Red Canyon, tells us that he saw water fl through the canyon forty years ago, but that the stream is now absorbed in stock ponds and wells. He thinks Red Canyon, which has the reputation of being the most diffi of all the gorges in this part of the Black Hills, would be the most likely route to agree with Clyman's story.<sup>13</sup> Mert Arthur, who lives at Pleasant Valley Ranch at the head of Red Canyon, says that he has been through the canyon on horseback and that the trip is very difficult even with a well- shod horse. Clyman's Indian ponies were of course unshod. Arthur mentions a stream of

water that still flows in an eastern tributary of Red Canyon and enters the canyon over a "jumpoff" three hundred feet high. About three miles downstream the canyon narrows and is blockaded with fallen boulders dropping from the limestone ledges above. Once into this gorge, it would be impossible to take horses out up the sides. In some parts of the rough canyon bed a pack horse would have to be unloaded to get through.

Smith's party, if they actually blundered into Red Canyon, was badly fooled. Had they avoided the gorge, they could have crossed the country without much trouble as the side ravines, such as Hawkwright, are easily traversed, crossed, or avoided. The entrance to Red Canyon is deceptively sheltered and innocent looking. The water was evidently anticipated as time for their night camp approached. The open glade where they enjoyed a "sumptious" barbecue of buffalo steaks was probably in the flat country near the mouth of upper Red Canyon. Below this, Red Canyon Creek plunges again into the broad gap north of Edgemont. The party would now have become deeply suspicious of these water gaps through the hogback, the one north of Edgemont and probably the one east of Dewey as well. These would be too likely to lead them into another rocky gorge. As Clyman says: <sup>14</sup>

we now found it would not do to follow down any stream in these mountains as we ware shure to meet with rocky inaccessible places So with great exertion we again assended to the top of a ridge and ware Quite lucky in gitting a main devide which led us a considerable distance before [we] had to desend again

This seems to mean that they climbed to the summit of the steep hogback bearing southwest of the mouth of Red Canyon in the direction of present Burdock. From this height they would have had a good westward view across an expanse of arid swales and mesas through which the green cottonwood groves along the Cheyenne River could have been seen far ahead. Below, almost beneath their feet, they would have traced the dark course of Beaver Creek coming from the north to join the Cheyenne. Beyond to the west lay a broad, flat-topped mesa which they may have accepted as an accessible route, above and between a maze of small twisting ravines intersecting the low hillocks across this barren land.

This broad mesa, now called the "21 Devide," lying north of the great north bend of the Cheyenne and west of what is now Dewey, answers to what was Clyman's "main devide" which led them "a considerable distance" before the party had to descend again.<sup>15</sup>

but this portion of the mountain furnished our horses with no food and they began to be verry poor and weak so we left 3 men and five horses behind to recruit while the rest of us proceded on there being some sighn of Beaver in the vicinity and hoping to soon find more where we Might all Stop for a time

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They had crossed a dry and barren stretch of country ten miles or so north of present Mule Creek Junction, Wyoming, and they could have possibly left their worn-out animals to recruit in the grassy cottonwood groves along the Cheyenne bottoms near present Hampshire, Wyoming. There are beaver still in that vicinity, although parts of the main river are dry at this fall season. The Cheyenne bottoms as well as those of the two Thunder Creeks are lined with thick groves of cottonwood. Along Lodgepole Creek the stands of timber are more sparse, and the water lies in pools along the dry course of the stream bed. Except in these river beds, there are no trees or thick brush of any kind across this wide, bare expanse. Grass is practically absent in September and October, except on the



Thunder Basin National Grassland, Wyoming

river bottoms, in this brown, barren, and desolate land, where even today the cattle ranches are few and far between.

And now we approach another puzzle in the Clyman story. After Jed Smith's encounter with the bear, says Clyman: <sup>16</sup>

we were still on the waters of [South Fork of] Shian River which heads almost in the eastern part of the Black Hill range taking a western course for a long distance into an uneven valley where a large portion of (of) the waters are sunk or absorbed then turning short to the east it enters the Black Hill range through a narrow canyon in apparently the highest and most abrupt part of the mountain enclosed in immense cliffs of the most pure and beautiful black smooth and shining [slate] and perhaps five hundred to one thousand feet high how [far] this slate extends I cannot tell We passed through this slate quarry about 2 miles and one of the men observed here or at some such place Mosses must have obtained the plates or tables on which the decalogue was inscribed

A different description of this phenomenon was written by Clyman in his "Memorandum" of 1840. It seems possible

that Clyman visited the canyon of the Cheyenne River east of Edgemont, South Dakota, where the river cuts through evenly stratified layers of dark gray Pierre Shale. But it is not clear just when this side trip was made, and it would not be pertinent here except that it was by inference during the time Smith was recovering from his bear fight. And we have now come to a main event in the Clyman narrative: the attack on Jed Smith by the grizzly.<sup>17</sup>

five days travel since leaving our given out horses and likewise Since Rose left us late in the afternoon while passing through a brushy bottom a large Grizzly came down the valley we being in single file men on foot leading pack horses he struck us about the center then turning ran parallel to our line Capt. Smith being in the advance he ran to the open ground and as he emerged from the thicket he and the bear met face to face Grizzly did not hesitate a moment but sprang on the capt taking him by the head first pitching sprawling on the earth he gave him a grab by the middle fortunately catching by the ball pouch and Butcher Knife which he broke but breaking several of his ribs and cutting his head badly

Clyman does not say so, but the bear was shot, probably as soon as guns could be pulled out of the packs. The Smith family descendants once claimed to have a claw of this bear as evidence of its demise. Where did all this occur?

Five days from where they left their horses, probably on the Cheyenne bottoms near the junction of Black (or Big) Thunder Creek, Wyoming, would seem to have brought them from forty to sixty miles westward into an open upland region where there are very few trees and no brushy bottoms to speak of. If we were to cut down the distance traveled to about thirty miles, they would have approached the eastern base of a high ridge dotted with little pines. The broad canyon or valley of Piney Creek issues from the recesses of this piney ridge. Its entrance is accessible between steep slopes nonnegotiable for a pack train. It spreads out into brushy flats or bottoms where high sagebrush grows thickly, forming what might even be called "thickets", and this is the only part of this region that supports such high sagebrush. There are similar patches of sagebrush along Antelope Creek some fifteen miles to the south. Here the sagebrush is lower and is interspersed with cottonwood trees. There are a few thickets of chokecherry bushes along Black Thunder Creek, but no one would normally try to lead a pack horse through them.

Another clue: A mile or so to the west of the brushy fields or bottoms at the mouth of Piney Creek Canyon, water appears in springs and pools beside grassy glades leading up toward the summit of the piney ridge.

Now it may be thought that Clyman might have remembered one of the cottonwood-forested bottoms along Thunder Creek,

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or even on the main Cheyenne River, as a "brushy bottom," but I think when Clyman said brush he meant brush and not cottonwood trees standing in groves where the approach of a bear would not be easily seen. Another thing might be considered: Is it likely that there were climbable trees, such as thickly growing cottonwoods, available where the grizzly came down the valley toward the captain? A man's instinct would be to run to a tree rather than into the open. At the Piney Creek site there are only widely scattered dwarf pine trees, no thickly growing cottonwoods to interfere with the progress of a pack train or to afford a means of escape.

The high ridge west of Piney Creek would be one of the few places where Clyman could have had a good view of the country. He would have seen the courses of the Cheyenne and its tributaries marked for miles and miles by threads of green contrasting vividly with the dun-colored landscape. How else, except by extensive travel in this generally flat region, could he have "ascertained" that they were still "on the waters of shiann river"? And if he had gone up Antelope Creek, which is a tributary of the Cheyenne, he would have had no question as to the stream drainage he was on.

Going back to where Jed lay bleeding, we must let Clyman finish telling his story: <sup>18</sup>

none of us having any surgical Knowledge what was to be done one Said come take hold and he wuld say why not you so it went around I asked the Capt what was best he said one or 2 [go] for water and if you have a needle and thread git it out and sew up my wounds around my head which was bleeding freely I got a pair of scissors and cut off his hair and then began my first Job of d[r] essing wounds upon examination I [found] the bear had taken nearly all of his head in his capcious mouth close to his left eye on one side and clos to his right ear on the other and laid the skull bare to near the crown of the head leaving a white streak whare his teeth passed one of his ears was torn fom his head out to the outer rim after stitching all the other wounds in the best way I was capabl and according to the captains directions the ear being the last I told him I could do nothing for his Eare 0 you must try to stich up some way or other said he then I put in my needle stiching it through and through and over and over laying the lacerated parts togather as nice as I could with my hands water was found in about ame mille when we all moved down and encamped the captain being able to mount his horse and ride to camp whare we pitched a tent the onley one we had and made him as comfortable as circumstances would permit this gave us a lisson on the charcter of the grissly Baare which we did not forget I now a found time to ride around and explore the immediate surroundings of our camp and asserntained that we ware still on the waters of [South Fork of] shiann river . . . This is a fine

country for game Buffaloe Elk Bare deer antelope &c likewise it produces some Hazel nuts Plumbs white thorn Berries wild currant large and of fine flavour and abundance of nutritious grass and some land that would bear cultivation

Plums, chokecherries, and berries would have been found along Antelope Creek as well as on Piney Creek. The "land that would bear cultivation" lies now along U.S. 59, the uplands north and south of Gillette, Wyoming, where there are fields of hay and grain. It seems probable that Clyman crossed the clear headwaters of the Belle Fourche, when he went from the Cheyenne drainage to the Powder. Here are his words: <sup>19</sup>

after remaining here ten days or 2 weks the capt. Began to ride out a few miles and as winter was rapidly approaching we began to make easy travel west ward and Struck the trail of Shian Indians the next day we came to their village traded and swaped a few horses with them and continued our march across a Ridge [of] mountains not steep & rocky (in general) but smooth and grassy in general with numerous springs and brook of pure water and well stocked with game dsending this ridge we came to the waters of Powder River Running West and north country mountainous and some what rocky.

[Edward] Rose with 15 or 16 Crow Indians came to our camp as soon as we raised a fire in the evening they had been watching for two days passed to assure themselves that no Shians were with us they and the Shians being at war they the Crows brought us several spare Horses which relieved our Broke down animals and gave us a chance to ride but they caused us to travel to fast for our poor horses and so Capt Smith gave them what they could pack sending Rose with them and we followed at our own gait stoping and Traping for beaver occasionally

Twenty miles to the west of Piney Creek would have found the trappers near the head of Porcupine Creek near present U.S. 59 about forty-five miles south of Gillette. This open, treeless upland region would answer Clyman's description of "land that would bear cultivation" in contrast to the barren country to the east. Then would come the "smooth and grassy" ridge or upland dividing the Cheyenne from the Powder. There they would have found the springs and clear streams at the headwaters of the Belle Fourche, the northern branch of the Cheyenne River. Then traveling northwest toward present-day Buffalo, they would have crossed the Powder River south of present Interstate 90 between Buffalo and Gillette. Throughout the broad drainage basin of Powder River in this area there does not appear to be a place that would fit Clyman's description of a "brushy bottom," except immediately along the river among the cottonwoods.

Presumably it was during this interval when they had sent

## Jedediah Smith's First Far-Western Expedition

Rose and the Crows on ahead and when they stopped and trapped for beaver that Clyman found the petrified stump that he could "barely lay [his] hand on top sitting in the saddle." Remember, they had been afoot until Rose returned with the fresh horses. This stump was one of the landmarks on the Smith-Clyman route. At another time (1840) Clyman said it "required some exertion for me to reach the top sitting on horseback." That would be an extraordinary height for a fossil stump. Where may such a recognizable landmark be located?

Clyman in his 1840 "Memorandum" says it stood in an: <sup>20</sup>

uneven vally in which the heads of the Shianne and Powder River rises ... in their vally and on the hight of Land dividing the two river we found a great quantity of petrifications Mostly of the vegatable Kingdom and on the North side of a ridge we pased allmost an entire forrest of petrified Timber apearantly of the pine species the stumps of which were standing thick ... some nearly perpendicular But mostly in an inclining posture some one way & some another

It was here that Clyman found his tall stump.

Paul O. McGrew, geologist at the University of Wyoming, put me on the trail of such a specimen. He promptly sent a picture published in a circular put out by the Buffalo Commercial Club. We visited Buffalo and after some inquiry were guided to the petrified forest and the Clyman stump by a son of Louis Timar, on whose ranch this fossil was located. The site lies eleven miles east of Buffalo on Dry Creek fork of Crazy Woman Creek, a branch of Powder River. Here there are many large petrified logs lying deeply embedded in the ground. Low stumps protrude from the surface, and logs in the ground lie upright and inclined at various degrees, agreeing with Clyman's description.

The tall stump stands about a mile south of the main "forest." It rises to a height of ten feet five inches and is four feet in diameter. The wood is completely silicified, very hard, and rings like metal when struck. Inquiry among the ranchers as far north as Sheridan and as far east as the Black Hills has disclosed no knowledge of any other upright stump of this size. I think this is a definite marker along the Jedediah Smith trail. With this to guide us, we may now return to the expedition.

Leaving the vicinity of the fossil stump, they crossed "several steep and high ridges which in any other country would be called mountains."<sup>21</sup> These were surely the Big Horn Mountains near Granite Pass southwest of Sheridan, Wyoming, for Clyman immediately mentions their crossing of Shell River: "Quite a stream running into the bighorn as I believe the mountains here do not appear to have any rigular direction but run in all directions are tolerable high but generall[y] precipitous... on Tongue river we struck the trail of [Rose and] the Crow Indians."

From there, according to the Gibbs copy of Smith's map, they followed Greybull River to the west and then south across the Owl Creek Mountains (probably along the route taken in reverse by William A. Jones in 1873), a route which was passable by wagons.<sup>22</sup>

### Footnotes:

1 Charles L. Camp, ed., James Clyman, *Frontiersman, 1792-1881: The Adventures of a Trapper and Covered-Wagon Emigrant as Told in His Own Reminiscences and Diaries* (Portland, 1960), hereafter cited as Camp, up-dates and revises the first edition (San Francisco, 1928) and includes the Memorandum and Diary of 1840 and other documents not included in the first edition.

"Col. James Clyman's Narrative," covering the 1823-24 expedition, was written at Napa, California, in 1871, and sent to Lyman C. Draper for his collection, now in the Wisconsin Historical Society. This is printed in Camp, 7-29. The "1840. - Memorandum and Diary of J Clyman," in Camp, 48-56, is a printing of the first twenty-eight pages in a notebook kept by Clyman and later in the possession of Everett Graff. The complete set of Clyman's original diaries, nine small notebooks, together with other personal papers of Clyman, are held by the Henry E. Huntington Library. Transcripts of the Clyman diaries were made by R. T. Montgomery for H. H. Bancroft and are in the Bancroft Library.

2 Abraham P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 2 vols. (Saint Louis, 1952), II: 738.

3 Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Indianapolis, 1953, best summarizes the career of Smith. But see also Dale L. Morgan, ed., *The West of William H. Ashley: The International Struggle for the Fur Trade of the Missouri, the Rocky Mountains, and the Columbia, with Explorations beyond the Continental Divide, Recorded in the Diaries and Letters of William H. Ashley and His Contemporaries, 1822-1838* (Denver, 1964). Earlier studies include Maurice S. Sullivan, *Jedediah Smith, Trader and Trail Breaker* (New York, 1936) and Harrison Clifford Dale, ed., *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829, with the Original Journals* (Cleveland, 1918; rev. ed., Glendale, 1941). Regarding maps, see Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and His Maps of the American West* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1954) and Carl I. Wheat, *Mapping the American West, 1540-1857: A Preliminary Study* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1954), 80-97.

This led across a pass about six miles west of Phlox Mountain and twenty miles or so southeast of Washakie's Needle, thence west to Dry Creek, down that twenty-five miles to Wind River some eight miles southeast of Crowheart Butte, thence across Sage Creek to Camp Brown on Little Wind River. An oil spring a mile or so east of Camp Brown furnished asphalt for the buildings there. It may have been the oil spring mentioned by Clyman, but is not the one shown on the Gibbs-Smith map.

What can be said of Smith's leadership on this his first "command"? There were blunders, perhaps too many blunders, some ignorance and lack of foresight. The thirsty White River march could have been avoided with a few canteens of water. And later in Smith's career a canteen or two might have prevented even more suffering, but such was the pride of the trapper — he could disdain water. A bit of reconnaissance would have demonstrated the dangers of Red Canyon. They should not have plunged blindly into the maw of that chasm, but they were easterners, unfamiliar with canyons. It is hard to understand why the horses were allowed to go without feed so long after leaving the Black Hills. Why did they not go down into the Cheyenne bottoms sooner instead of plugging along on that dry mesa top? Lastly, did

## Jedediah Smith's First Far-Western Expedition

Smith have his gun handy when the bear came down the valley to attack him? Perhaps all the guns were in the packs, and no one could reach a weapon in time to prevent Smith from being half-scalped.

Jedediah Smith, inexperienced as he then was, became a courageous, intrepid, and indefatigable leader. His men would follow him anywhere. But there seems to have been a vein of carelessness or even recklessness in him that may have led him into difficulty, not only on this first expedition but later when his parties were massacred by Indians on the Colorado River and later still on the Umpqua when he was out of camp.

Smith and his men spent the winter with the Crows on Wind River. They tried and failed to cross Union Pass in the snow. Then with the help of a Crow sand map, engineered by Clyman, they made their way south to the Sweetwater, west over South Pass, and on into history.

4 Camp, 15.

5 Camp, 15-16.

6 They had to rely on their powder horns and camp kettles, evidently having no canteens (did Smith ever carry canteens?). Later in the western desert of Utah he had to bring water back in a "kettle" to one of his men, buried as usual in sand. Four lines previously I have supplied the word "trees" with doubt. There were straggling cottonwoods along White River, as noted by Prince Paul of Württemberg, who was there that year.

7 Broad patches of dwarf beaver tail cactus, thickly growing, are common here.

8 Camp, 50.

9 Camp, 17.

10 Camp, 17.

11 Camp, 17.

12 Camp, 17.

13 The head (entrance) of Red Canyon is in Sec. 2, T. 6 S., Range 3 East. The canyon cuts through the bright red Spearfish formation of Triassic period (these softer red rocks overlie the hard ledges of gray Minnekahta limestone, which in turn rest on the Opeche formation). At the bottom of the gorge lies the Minnelusa limestone, which would be slippery for an unshod horse.

14 Camp, 17-18.

15 Camp, 18.

16 Camp, 18-19.

17 Camp, 18.

18 Camp, 18-19.

20 Camp, 51.

21 Camp, 20.

22 *Report upon the Reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming Made in the Summer of 1873 by William A. Jones, Captain of Engineers, U.S.A.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874), 43 Cong., 1 sess., House Ex. Doc. 285 (x1615).

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### Editor's Closing Notes:

*Even after being mauled by a grizzly, Jedediah did not run from them because they were common especially in California, and the bears were much bigger than today because the carbine rifle had yet to be invented during the 1820s. The bears were also more transparent during this time because they primarily dwelled in lower elevations in or near riparian ecosystems. In the west it was not unusual to sight 50 bears in one day. And for Team Smith, they counted 200 grizzly bears in one day in California. In the story, Smith was again attacked twice by separate bears on the same day in California. The last one got his horse by the tail and held on for 30 or 40 feet before losing his hold. So with a reach, one can presume a "large" grizzly bear was 1,000 lbs+ in the 1820s. About the size of the real Old Mose who when the real story was told through science, he was an ornery and mature 10-12 year old bruin that was full of lead, and missing toes from several men who tried to kill him for sport and failed. He was no man killer as well. And it was the hunter, Anthony who killed Mose, not Pigg the Outdoor Life writer, who described Mose as a 30 year old serial killer and a menace to society. Old Mose is still with us! And you can find him at the University of California Museum (Berkeley) of Vertebræ Zoology, Mammal Division, Catalog MVZ #113385.*

*Moving forward to today it makes the editor content to see the historic Green River cattle co-exist on the people's multi-use forest lands on Union Pass with the Yellowstone Grizzly bear in his full glory living in those mountains. Even Jedediah would be happy to still see bears in the wild in a country with 350 million people. This is another example of the greatness of Jedediah Smith. He was the very rare person who had great courage and fortitude to continually risk his well being by putting himself in front of or near grizzlies on a regular, daily in some cases, basis. We, flatlanders in the settlements, will never know the wild and lonesome feeling of riding and walking through areas filled with huge bears.*

*As noted in Smith's estate, Jedediah Smith kept several grizzly bear furs so he could have those precious keepsakes at home in St. Louis. That Smith nostalgia was re-fueled when Maurice Sullivan re-introduced Jedediah Smith to the American*



Old Mose with 5' 10" taxidermist



## President/Editor's Comments - Kevin Kucera



**Kevin Kucera**  
**President/Editor**

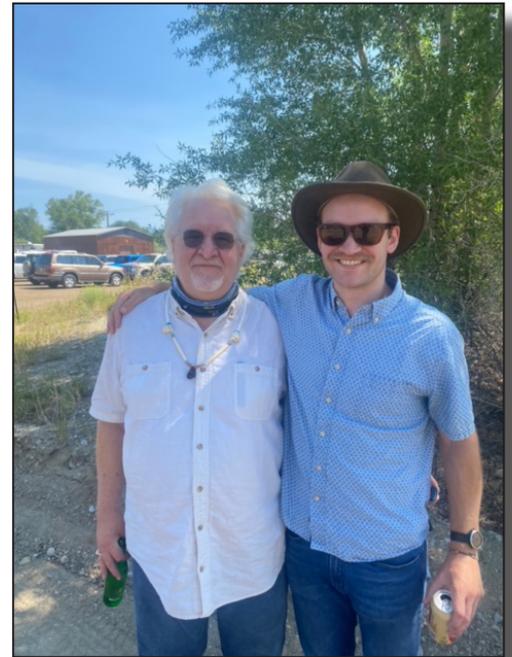
*"When you are through changing - your through"*

Alfred P. Sloan  
Industrialist

These words of Al Sloan, also apply to our volunteer non-profit organization, the Jedediah Smith Society. So the above is a segue to our upcoming elections, which will allow us to change our leadership through voting to keep things fresh and progressing forward in the new world we live in today. Three years ago the new JSS BoD came out of the gates running and the resulting accomplishments speak for themselves. Some of the successes under the current leadership team include; increasing membership numbers and balancing the books year to year, updating the bylaws, past financials and the CA non-profit registration; and after 30 years we updated and digitized the JSS Bibliography with significant market recognition. New research breakthroughs have happened and the Castor went digital increasing its size and scope to the delight of our membership and other fur trade fans. This is testament to our wonderful Board of Directors and Publisher, Soler Graphics, who all made it happen for our Society. Their passion and hard work is so greatly appreciated by the Editor/President.

So as we get closer to our BoD elections this spring during our Annual Meeting at our home base, the University of Pacific, Stockton, CA - I urge all our members to get involved and subsequently feel good about giving back; and more importantly you will have fun while making a positive difference on this planet. I know our next leadership team is going to be great – because I have had the blessing to work with some of them over the last years. I can assure you they will run faster than Smith fleeing a white bear, and you can be a member of that dynamic team as well. Just Do It - When you are through changing, you are through!

Kevin Kucera  
Duck Lake, Indiana  
January, 2022



**Kevin and Luke Kucera, Museum of the Mountain Man, Green River Rendezvous 2021**

### **CASTOR CANADENSIS NEWSLETTER GUIDELINES**

The editor welcomes articles for publication.  
Please review the following guidelines:

1. Prospective authors should send their articles or questions to Kevin Kucera at [kckucera@msn.com](mailto:kckucera@msn.com)
2. Submit in MS Word.
3. End notes should be numbered consecutively.
4. Photographs, maps or illustrations should be sent as an attachment and not embedded into the article. They should also be numbered i.e. Fig 1. A separate list with Fig. No. should be attached with a short title of the photograph etc.
5. After receipt the article will be reviewed by a technical editor. Once this is completed the author will be notified and an approximate date for publication will be provided.
6. Please note the *Castor Canadensis* is not responsible for either the research or the opinions of the writer.

# The Bancroft Library

at the University of California–Berkeley Campus  
By Milton von Damm



The Bancroft Library is the heart of the 25 libraries that constitute the Berkeley Campus library system. This library houses nearly 700,000 books, 175 million manuscript documents and 9 million photographs and other pictorial materials, 8 million digital images, 117,000 microforms and 25,000 maps. In addition to student and faculty use, scholars from all over the world travel to the reading room to experience contact with manuscripts (original sources), rare books and

unique materials. Bancroft holdings are never circulated, but there is a continuous effort to make holdings available by expanding the use of online technology. Although the Bancroft Library has some independently funded projects, the core of their mission is Western Americana history in keeping with the original library acquisition from Hubert Bancroft in 1905 that survived the San Francisco earthquake. The 39 volumes of western history created by Hubert Bancroft was impressive by its inclusion of the vast variety of information that he gathered and efforts of his large staff. There are seven volumes on just California, the first volume involves indigenous cultures and the other volumes include other western states and from Alaska to Panama.

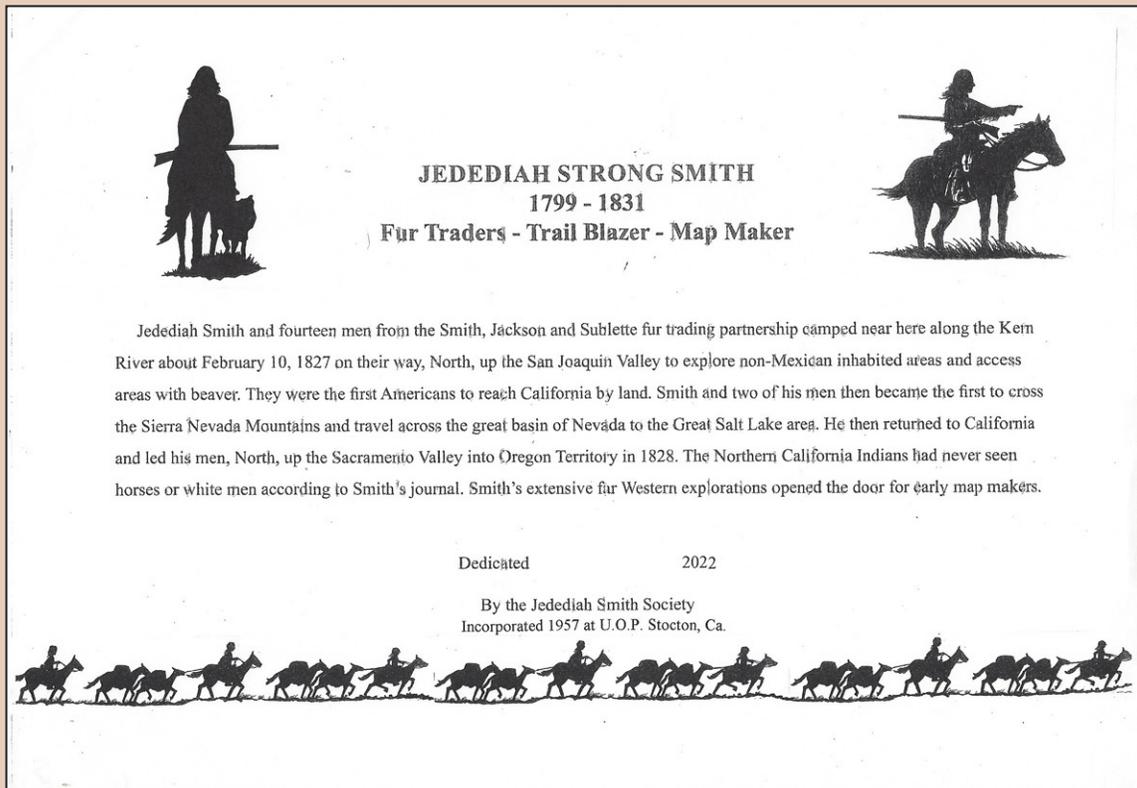
Bancroft library collections regarding the opening of the West to American immigration includes copies of journals and correspondence about Jedediah Smith and other fur trade leaders. Although Dale Morgan's epic book, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* was published while he was working for the Director of The Bancroft Library as a research associate, much of his research was done before he came to Berkeley. The library also has ample information and documents about Jed's family and descendants. Dale Morgan and Carl Wheat's map book, *Jedediah Smith and His Maps of The American West*, published in 1954 by the California Historical Society, was prepared with the support of Dr. George Hammond, Director of the Bancroft Library. Another book, this one edited by Dale Morgan while at the Bancroft Library and published in 1864 and dedicated to Carl Irving Wheat, is *The West of William H. Ashley 1822-1838*. This compilation of correspondence is an important source of the content of original letters to and from Ashley about the fur trade. Although the introduction by Morgan is signed "from the Bancroft Library, 1963", the introduction reveals that much of Morgan's research involved materials from the Missouri Historical Society and included sources by William Sublette and Robert Campbell as well as William Ashley. This may explain why the Bancroft Library has such good information about Campbell and Sublette.

Less than half of Bancroft's operation budget comes from the general funds budget of the campus. A \$10 million goal campaign is underway to establish an ongoing source of income to help with special projects and ongoing programs that are essential to maintaining Bancroft's greatness. Over \$9.2 million of the goal has already been raised. The endowment income will help ensure that there is a source to turn to for opportunity purchases of large or rare collections . to supplement the efforts of an auxiliary support non profit corporation, *The Friends of the Bancroft Library*.

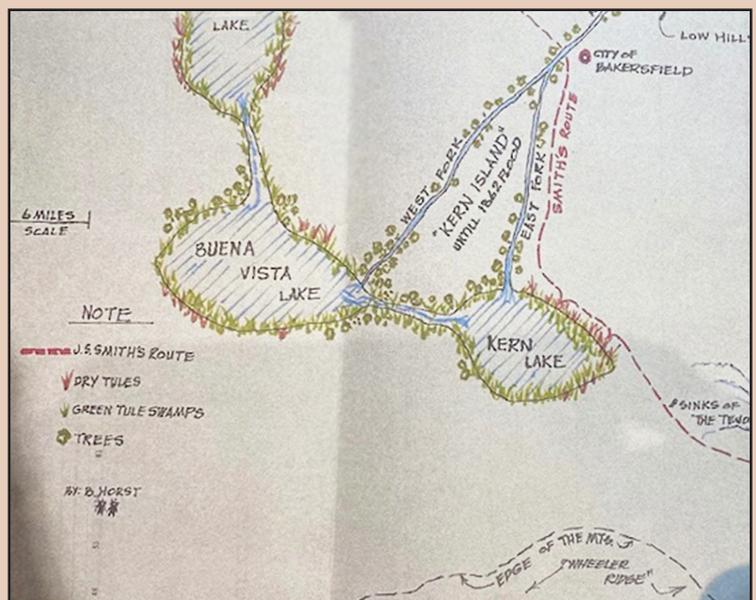
*The Friends of The Bancroft Library* was established in 1946 and currently receives annual donations from over 1,500 members that range between less than \$250 dollars to over \$10,000. Member benefits include a semiannual newsletter, notifications of events, lectures, receptions and exhibition openings. Donors contributing over \$250 in 2022 will also receive a printed keepsake such as a rare document or first published edition of a manuscript. The Friends organization is guided by a 40-member Council elected from the membership. One of the leading members of The Council is Jedediah Smith Society member Fred Gregory, a retired Attorney who lives in Southern California and who had ancestors who crossed the Sierra mountain just ahead of the donner party in 1846. I am a rookie Council member. Come join the Friends of the Bancroft Library and learn more about how you can support our largest depository and preservation libraries of Western Americana history.

# Monuments

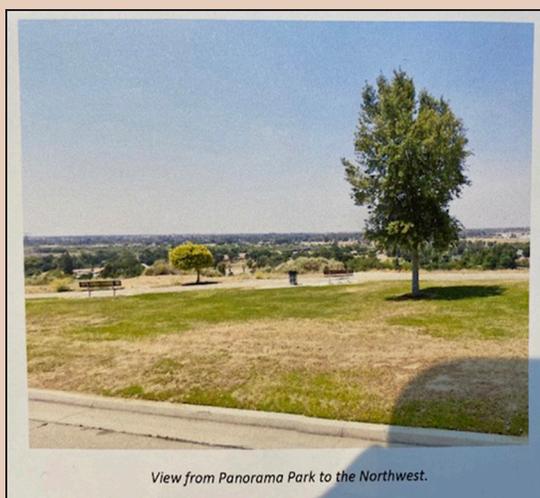
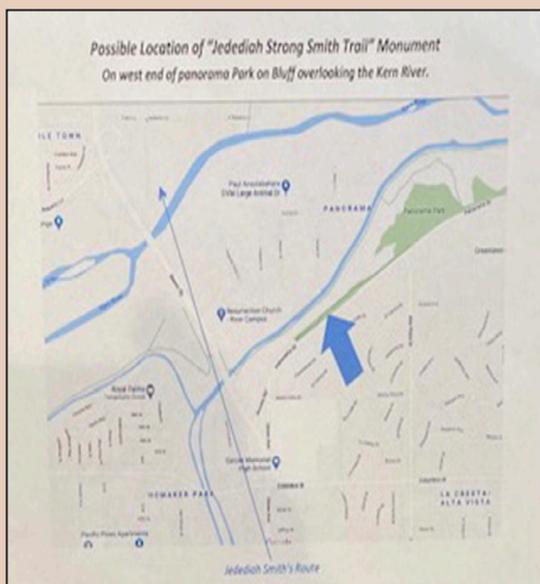
## A New Jedediah Smith Monument Bakersfield, California By, Milton von Damm



Raymond F. Wood compiled a book, published by The Jedediah Smith Society in 1999, that described and pictured sixty monuments about Jedediah Smith that are located in eight states. One of these monuments, California registered landmark #660, was placed and dedicated near Bakersfield along highway 58 near where the road exits the Tehachapi Mountains via Tehachapi Pass. This monument was a joint project between the California State Park Commission, the Kern County Historical Society, the Native Daughters of The Golden West and the Kern County Museum. The basis for the monument location is Jed's 1827 route from the San Bernardino Mountains Eastern slope, following his departure from the San Gabriel Mission, where he pivoted North to travel into the California valley. The 1842 Fremont, Gibbs, Smith map contains a line, presumably based on now lost Jedediah Smith maps and notes, that goes East toward today's Victorville, then Northeast toward today's Mojave City, then North approximately



## Monuments



through Tehachapi Pass, the route of Highway 58 and entering into the San Joaquin Valley just South of Bakersfield.

The California Landmark depicting this first northern journey through San Joaquin Valley by an American and his party consisted of a large rock embedded with a brass plate describing the historic event. Sometime after 1999, someone pried off and stole the plate. Efforts have been discussed by local historical societies and others to request the State to replace the plate and a stalemate about whether to make a different monument, perhaps in a different location, or simply restore the damaged monument and preserve the original location, delayed action. A few years ago the Jedediah Smith Society and Bakersfield resident who is a local historian and also a member of our Society, donated \$2,000 to the Jedediah Smith Society to find a solution to the impasse.

After researching Bakersfield monument possibilities and conferring with Joe Molter, Teresa Melbar, Jim Smith and Jim Ahrens, the Treasurer recommended at the August 7, 2020 Board meeting that the Society seek permission from local authorities to enable The Jedediah Smith Society to sponsor the creation of a new commemorative monument at a site on a bluff looking down at the Kern River where Jed and his men camped. The Board approved the proposal.

Jim Ahrens, who is a member and lives in Bakersfield, lobbied our site proposal along with our offer to pay for the monument. There has been no opposition so far. Jim has been a bull dog in pursuing the project and his efforts are acknowledged and appreciated. By happy happenstance, Treasurer von Damm and member William Horst, a resident of Porterville, a farming community a few miles North of Bakersfield have become friends. William is an artist and lifelong resident and historian

of Southern San Joaquin Valley. In addition, he has considerable experience in designing and having monuments made and installed for E Clampus Vitus, a still breathing historic, all male, hard drinking bunch who love their California history. Bill has been a totally hard working and reliable volunteer. The realization of this new monument would have not been possible without their efforts.

Appreciation is also extended to Jim Smith who brought in Jim Ahrens, to Theresa Melbar for her donations and consultations, and Joe Molter for his advice and dedication to monument projects.

The Board of the Jedediah Smith Society reviewed the work in process and approved up to \$5,000 to fund the project, of which \$2,000 is from the Melbar donation.



Jim Ahrens



William Horst

**We are looking to fill our entire 15 member Board of Directors!**

**Will you join us?**

**There are many different types of positions to include a variety of interests.**

***Many hands make light work.***

Nominating Committee

Chairperson: Jim Smith: [jim@smithandmcgowan.com](mailto:jim@smithandmcgowan.com)

Rich Cimino: [rscimino@gmail.com](mailto:rscimino@gmail.com)

Luke Kucera: [lkucera@wustl.edu](mailto:lkucera@wustl.edu)

## **Upcoming Events**

*The UOP John Muir Symposium  
will be held at  
the University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA  
on April 22-24, 2022*



***JSS Annual Meeting  
Friday, April 22, 2022  
in the UOP Library at 9:30am***

Theme: “Our UOP Relationship and Our Collection”

**Mark your Calendars!**



**Special request to all members:**

Please check your files for any papers, presenter ideas, posters, maps or photos of earlier Rendezvous & Annual Meetings.

Please let us know. Photos can be emailed to:

Rich Cimino - [Rscimino@gmail.com](mailto:Rscimino@gmail.com)

We would like to have them available for the meeting.

## Archives Corner

### Letters: J. Ernest Smith to Sullivan

*Ernest Smith was a descendant of Nelson Paddock Smith, the youngest brother of Jedediah Smith. Paddock led a somewhat transient life for the times, and his last address was in Texas, where he is buried in Texarkana. He sent the Smith California, etc. to Maurice Sullivan, the author who rescued Jedediah Smith from obscurity. He was an excellent researcher and one may assume this derived from his Jedediah Smith passion, rather than training or skill because he was not an author or academic by trade.*

*The cost of the Smith Creamer weapons is unbelievable! Certainly these weapons brought unwanted jealousy from others.*

*On his last trail ride to Santa Fe, Smith was packing weaponry equivalent to 'Lamborghini', while his brothers and business partners were packing "Chevrolet" weaponry.*

*So it is hard to believe, the confident Smith would get scared of a group of Comanche that were a mile away per his nephew E.D. Smith. He had great weapons and a bay stallion which by design was a fast horse which could outrun most horses. It is even harder to believe the contrived story of how Smith's "Lamborghini" weapons ( after his death) ended up on a roadside hundreds of miles away being peddled by local peasants.*

*If the Comanche truly did kill Smith - then it is hard to imagine on any level, that the great warriors of the plains would give away/not want GOLD inlaid top of the line weapons! This is a classic story of fascism - the Comanche were not ignorant! To infer they had no use for these weapons as if they were on another planet is plain wrong . They were better at warfare than the whites(soldiers included) being the Comanche kept the whites out of their homeland for decades after other western tribes succumbed to the white invasion done by mass migration from the east. In fact, this western migration is the greatest in human history, and more impressive than Hannibal's trek. The Comanche were an advanced culture, and, well respected by all. They were not fools who would give away GOLD.*

*The true story of Smith's Creamer weapons has yet to be told - as the cold winds in barren Kansas whisper the name Jedediah in angst...*

San Antonio, Tex.  
June 11/33

Mr. M.S. Sullivan  
Redlands, Cal.

Dear Mr. Sullivan, you must excuse my not answering your former letter on account of my sister not having returned the Journal to me. She always says she will do so but has not yet sent it. As to the names of the Indian tribes & places, I think Uncle Jed spelled them phonetically as he had no other means of knowing them.

From all I ever learned about my great grandfather, he was neither minister or a tailor, but a farmer. As to his father being a Major I remember when Uncle Peter's daughter Josie was married to Major Joseph Lyman of Council Bluffs, Iowa, my grandfather said it was nothing to be a Major as his grandfather was a Major in the Revolutionary War, but did not say where he enlisted but we always thought it was somewhere in Connecticut, probably New London as we had relations there whom my grand parents once visited while on a trip to New York from St. Louis.

Now as to Uncle Jed being a freight Clerk on the Great Lakes I never heard, but it would not surprise me as he lived for so many years on the shores of Lake Erie that he may have found employment on some vessel sailing

## Archives Corner

*Letters: J. Ernest Smith to Sullivan (continued)*

on them. As to his being a rifleman on one of Com. Perry's ships, I think that can be taken "Cum grano salis" or else one of the vagaries of E.D. Smith's versatile mind.

4th All of the brothers of my Grandfather that I ever saw, Peter, Ira & Nelson, had dark brown hair or rather a medium brown and Grandpa & Nelson had brown beard[s]. Peter & Ira were always smooth shaved when I saw them.

Aunt Eunice Simonds was a golden haired blue eyed blond and my Grandmother said when she was young she was very beautiful.

I do not know how my Grandfather got possession of Uncle Jed's Journal. He had it before I was born. I never heard of any one named Parkman and of course I know nothing about him or his descendants. B.P. Smith was born June 13 - 1813 at Northeast [township] about 15 miles East of Erie, Penn. When a large boy, he moved with his father to Ashtabula, Ohio and grew to manhood there. He went to St. Louise when about 19 or 20 and was married on July 6 - 1834 to Margaretta, Nye Young. From all I can remember he worked for Uncle Jed until a very few years afterward went into the Mercantile business with his brother in law James Young. The firm's name was Young and Smith. Upon the sudden death of James Young he sold the business and bought a large farm in Morgan Co., Ill. After running the farm some years he sold out and went to Greenville, Ill and in 1850 to raise a train and went overland to California and on arriving at Sacramento after losing all their wagon and everything else but their guns & horses, and found Ira Smith was Constable there and was made Deputy. After living there a while he went to San Francisco and brought his niece Fanny with him back to the States. He came by ship to Panama & thence to New York.

He then went back into business at Greenville, Ill. In 1852 my Father & Mother were married and B.P. went to work for my father. About 1854 they failed in business and started for California overland. Upon arriving at Oskaloosa, Iowa they found his brother Nelson engaged in business and my Grandmother was taken very ill there so they gave up the trip and stayed in Iowa until 1859 when they moved back to Greenville and stayed there until 1862 when they moved back to Missouri & stayed there until 1874 when we all came to Texas. They all excepting my sister and myself an sleeping their last sleep.

One thing I want to tell about is Uncle Jed's gun & pistols. They were made by the finest gunsmith in the country Phillip Creamer of St. Louis. It had a point blank range of 600 yards and cost him \$150.00 for the rifle and \$50.00 each for the pistols. It gave a man prestige in those days to own a Creamer rifle, as they were so high priced and of such a high quality.

Grandpa Smith was named for a famous Methodist Preacher Benjamin Green Paddock.

I will not be able to visit the Coast this summer as we intend going to Chicago a little later on but I may go out there next year.

Quien Sabe ? Deo Volente.

I hope I have been of some help to you and wish I could have done more.

Wishing you success

I remain your's truly.

J. Ernest Smith

227 West Huizache Ave.

San Antonio, Texas

## Archives Corner

*Letters: J. Ernest Smith to Sullivan (continued)*

San Antonio, Tex. July 2/33

Mr. Maurice S. Sullivan  
Redlands, Cal.

Dear Mr. Sullivan. In reply to your last letter will say that the rifle and pistols belonging to Uncle Jed, were all made by Philip Creamer of St. Louis. He had owned them for years and I am sure that they were at first flint locks and afterward made into percussion locks. My Grandfather said that at one time in St. Louis a great discussion arose between Uncle Jed and some other men among whom were some men from Washington D.C. The others claimed their pistols were the best, so Uncle Jed dared to load their pistols and put them with his and leave them in a tub of water overnight. The next morning none of them would fire but his and both of his fired as well as usual.

These weapons had the name "P. Creamer" inlayed with gold on their barrels.

Uncle Austin gave the rifle to my Grandfather and he took it to California when he went in 1850 or 1851. While there he fired at some deer and as the bullet fell short he reloaded and fired again and the bullet fell short again so he stepped off the distance it carried and it was 650 steps, so he said it must have been over 600 yards point blank.

While he was in Sacramento he loaned the rifle to his brother-in-law N.P. McCracken and he returned without it and said he had lost it. I always thought that someone had stolen it from him. How a man could lose a rifle has always been a mystery to me.

My Grandfather said the rifle would carry a mile if one elevated the barrel enough and would use enough powder. He had fired a bullet across the Mississippi River more than once.

I don't remember to whom Uncle Austin gave the pistols. My Grandfather was his (as everyone that knew B.P.) favorite and when he died he divided his belongings with his brothers.

I am sure Uncle Jed was not of a sandy complexion. The Smiths were all brown haired and good looking men and most of them wrote a splendid hand.

E.D. Smith probably did not know that Samuel Colt did not make repeating rifles until years after Uncle Jed died. My information has been from my Grandfather who was in a position to know all about it.

It has been unusually hot here, 96° to 99° for the whole month of June and only about 30% of our usual rain and everything is burning up.

I hope my letter will give you the information you wanted.

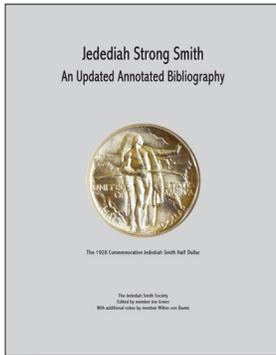
By the way you address me as J. Edward Smith, but my name is J Earnest Smith. Edward Smith was Uncle Nelson's son who died nearly 50 years ago.

I never met E.D. Smith and I do not remember where he lives.

If I live until next Summer I hope to go to California and will sure hunt you up.

Yours Very Truly  
J. Ernest Smith  
227 West Huizache Ave.  
S.A. Texas

## JSS An Updated Annotated Bibliography



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*We Thank you!  
We Thank you!*

### **New Members**

**Please welcome our new members to the Society.** We welcome you to our events and participation on various committees. If you'd like to write an article please see the guidelines under the editor column.

#### **Bob Zybach**

P.O. Box 1386  
Cottage Grove,  
Oregon 97424  
(541) 505-1298  
Zybachb@orww.org

#### **James Cogan**

480 W. Claire Ct.  
Meridian, ID 83646  
(805) 368-3182  
cogantales@yahoo.com

### **In Memoriam**

Our heartfelt condolences go out to the families of member **Allen Ritter** of Hollister, CA

Died May 26, 2021

86 years old

member **Geno Oliver** of Reno, NV

Died Sept 5, 2021,

three days before his 89th birthday

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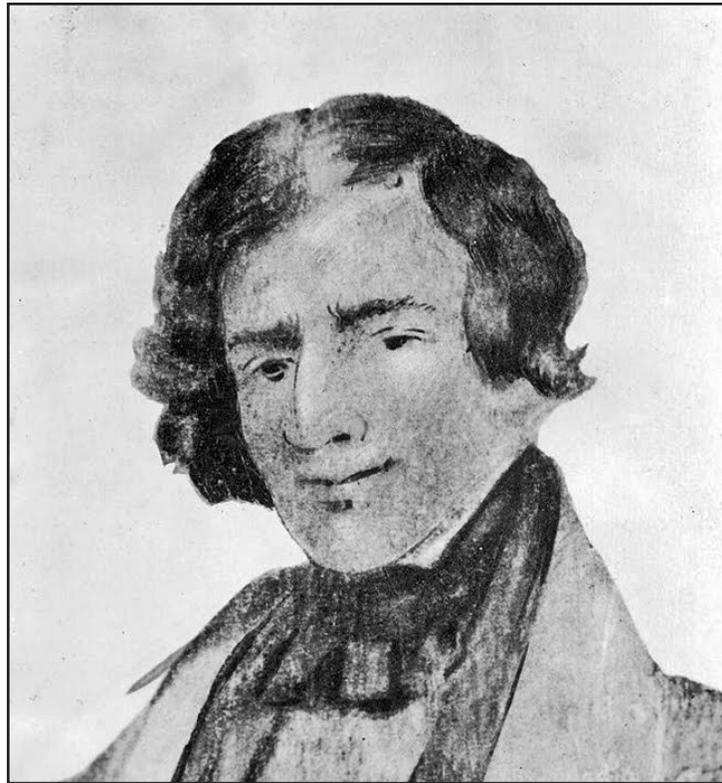
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