



# CASTOR CANADENSIS

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

FALL 2017 CASTOR

## Comparing David Thompson, Wilson Price Hunt and Jedediah Smith

BY, DAVID MALAHER, MARCH 19, 2015

*David Malaher is an independent researcher specializing in the history of the US/Canada boundary with a particular interest in the influence of the fur trade. Malaher's research includes on-site visits to important boundary locations as well as primary archive sources in Canada, the US, the UK, France, Spain and Russia. In addition to first hand knowledge of the fur trade and boundary countryside, Malaher brings practical surveying experience to the subject as a (retired) professional engineer. He is a member of the Manitoba Historical Society, the Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, the Jedediah Smith Society, and the Historical Map Society of British Columbia. Malaher lives in Whistler, BC.*

*Malaher is active with presenting written papers and articles on historical boundary topics and related aspects of the fur trade, often with maps prepared by him.*

*Academically, Malaher maintains working relations with units at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg. He has served as a member and Chair of the Board of the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba.*

This comparison of David Thompson, Wilson Price Hunt and Jedediah Smith deals with a subset of the larger group of eight men who marked the first paths westward across North America. The other five are Samuel Hearne, Alexander Mackenzie, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and Simon Fraser. They were all hoping to find an overland route across the North American continent in pursuit of the dream of trading with China. The objective was to have goods and people pass safely and conveniently from the Atlantic to Pacific, in lieu of sailing through a Northwest Passage in the Arctic Ocean. All eight made important, essential discoveries about the geography of the interior of North America, especially the western and northern regions.

Thompson, Hunt and Smith are compared here to illustrate how these later three men made use of the work of the first five, and in what political and business environment their expeditions were undertaken. These eight men as well as many other western explorers were at the leading edge of territorial rivalry between British Imperialism and American Republicanism. It is expected that readers of this article will have a fair level of prior knowledge and so certain details and dates are not repeated for the sake of brevity.

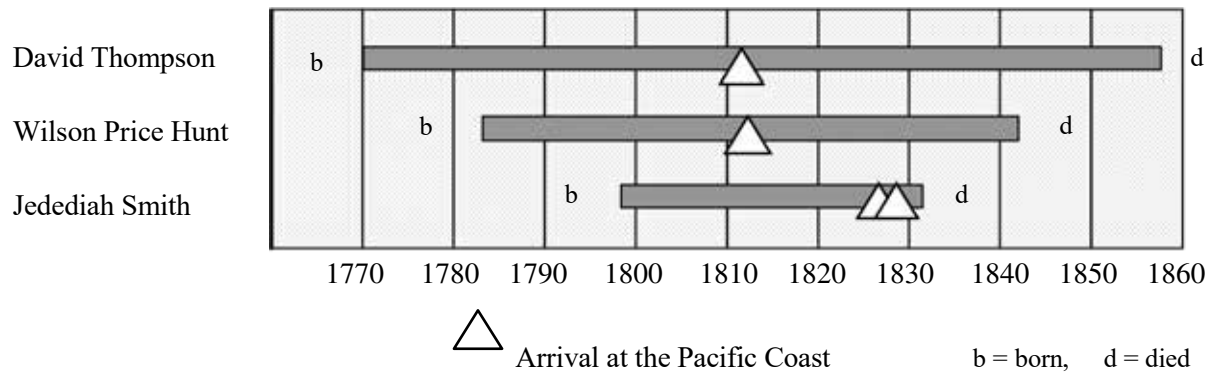
While Thompson was British and is relatively well known in Canada, Hunt and Smith were American and their roles in opening paths across the continent are publicized in the US. By bringing all three together in the same article we hope to illustrate their shared talents in exploration during the early 19th century. Thompson gained prominence as a fur trader and surveyor during a quarter century from the late 1780s to 1812 when he retired from the North West Company. He continued surveying by working for the International Boundary Commission from 1816 to 1826 and then in private practice until the 1840s. Hunt and Smith, by comparison, came and went from the exploration scene over a modest twenty year period between

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### Comparing David Thompson, Wilson Price Hunt and Jedediah Smith



1810 and 1830. Although Thompson clearly had a longer presence than Hunt and Smith, the key point of comparison is the manner in which each of them covered a unique path to the Pacific coast. A time-line graph is handy for comparing dates when they reached the Pacific coast and their overlapping life periods.

Both Thompson and Hunt were “company men”, working for well financed corporations, the North West Company and the Pacific Fur Company respectively, whose management was comfortably far from the frontier of unknown western geography. They undertook their journeys with men and supplies paid for by the corporation. Smith, on the other hand, was in a small fur trading partnership along with Jackson and Sublette and essentially had to use his own credit to engage men and purchase supplies. On paper, this difference in financial backing was substantial but it could not ameliorate the actual level of danger, hardship or threat of starvation faced by everyone during their journeys.

At age 41 when Thompson reached the Pacific coast at the mouth of the Columbia River he was ten years older than Hunt or Smith when they arrived at the same place by different paths.

Thompson was at the time a highly experienced outdoorsman accustomed to privations while traveling across plains, mountains and lakes, and to shooting game to feed himself and his men. Although Smith had fewer years of the same experience he was evidently a fast learner and had an ability to survive in the wilderness equal to Thompson’s. Hunt had even less experience in the wilderness than Smith and his party suffered badly from lack of shelter and food.

Overall health and survival of their men make strong points for comparing Thompson, Hunt and Smith. Smith’s career of fur trading and exploration covered just 10 years, 1822 to 1831, and ended with his death in a skirmish with Comanches on the Santa Fe Trail. In the beginning, Smith’s travels avoided conflicts but as he covered ever wider territory his exposure to danger grew. His last two major expeditions, to San Diego and to Fort Vancouver, were disastrous in terms of losing his men in skirmishes. In five confrontations, over thirty men under Smith were killed. By comparison, Hunt lost three men under his command and a new-born baby in his single expedition crossing from the Missouri River to Fort Astoria, and these were to drowning and starvation rather than in fights. Both Smith and Hunt traveled with large parties of 20 to 60 men whereas Thompson tended to travel with smaller numbers of around a dozen, except for his winter expedition to the Mandan Villages when there were 20 in the party. Thompson, in all his years of fur trading, exploration and surveying covering over 55,000 miles, did not lose a single man under his command.

Leadership skill is another point of comparison. All three men were successful in this characteristic but with different approaches. Hunt seems the least likely to have been a leader under the difficult conditions of his journey and due to the disparate crew of men he had collected in Montreal, Mackinac and St. Louis. However, his two most senior companions reveal Hunt’s strengths; Ramsay Crooks and Donald Mackenzie. Both Crooks and Mackenzie later reached high ranking positions in the fur trade with greater demand on leadership skills

than even the hazardous crossing of the continent. Both of them were ambitious and wanted Hunt's job as leader of Astor's overland party, and they made this known to Hunt and Astor before the party had departed from St. Louis. Nevertheless, Hunt made the big decisions, such as not to follow the Missouri River route of Lewis and Clark, he gave a powerful speech to the Sioux, and he issued the orders that Crooks and Mackenzie followed. At one point while together on the Missouri River Hunt challenged Manuel Lisa, the clever and experienced Spanish trader, to a pistol duel over a taunting insult. Lisa ultimately backed down and cooperated with Hunt indicating that the seemingly aloof, mild mannered, indecisive young store clerk could fulfill the role to which Astor appointed him.

Little is known of Smith's direct dealings with his men due to the scarcity of diaries and other typical references. Like Hunt, we must rely on observations of the end results to judge Smith's leadership style. George Simpson respected Smith for his evident intelligence and negotiating skills while staying at Fort Vancouver over the winter of 1828-29. Personal charisma and optimism would seem to be key features of Smith's leadership with his men. Smith also produced near miracles such as discovering water in the desert and finding paths to safety in any terrain, and this ability was no doubt effective in winning loyalty. Thompson's means of leadership are similarly hard to pin down. The tough NWC managers recognized Thompson's qualities when they made him a partner in the company. He was expert at many things; horse riding, canoeing, mountaineering, shooting game, winning respect from Indians, endurance, patience and applying astronomy to measure his latitude and longitude. Thompson did not have Smith's charisma or Smith's remarkable sense of direction but with his astronomical instruments he knew where he was and where he wanted to go and he got there with all his men. Demonstration of personal strengths in survival and travel must have given Thompson his authority to lead men into the unknown.

Different though these three men were, they shared a common achievement by reaching the mouth of the Columbia River over unrecorded trails,

rivers and mountain passes in the period of 1811 to 1828. Between the three of them, Thompson was the first to arrive which might be sufficient to lay claim to a greater achievement than the other two but Thompson was actually the second overland explorer to reach the Columbia River, after Lewis and Clark. Greater or lesser achievement awards in this case are pointless since they all used a different path, and each path was essential in understanding the geographic features of western North America. All the routes covered by these eight explorers were rough and difficult and no route was suitable for trading with the Orient, and none was good enough to remain in serious use after railways came into the region.

The best trans-continental route used by these eight men was through the relatively gentle South Pass, first used by Robert Stuart, based on advice from Shoshones, as his crossing point heading eastward from Fort Astoria to St. Louis in 1811-12. Stuart's employer, J. J. Astor, suppressed the news on the grounds that it was proprietary to his fur trade business and then made no further use of it. Jedediah Smith independently rediscovered the South Pass in 1822 heading west for William Ashley. Eight years later Smith sent a fur trade supply train of ten wagons from St. Louis over the pass to the Green River Rendezvous, opening the route for wheeled carriages. Smith and his partners Jackson and Sublette sent a letter to the US Congress in 1830 commenting on the suitability of the South Pass for crossing the Rocky Mountains by wagons and even milk cows but they could not have foreseen that in 20 years an exodus would start bringing 500,000 emigrants from the east over the South Pass to settle in Oregon, Idaho and California.

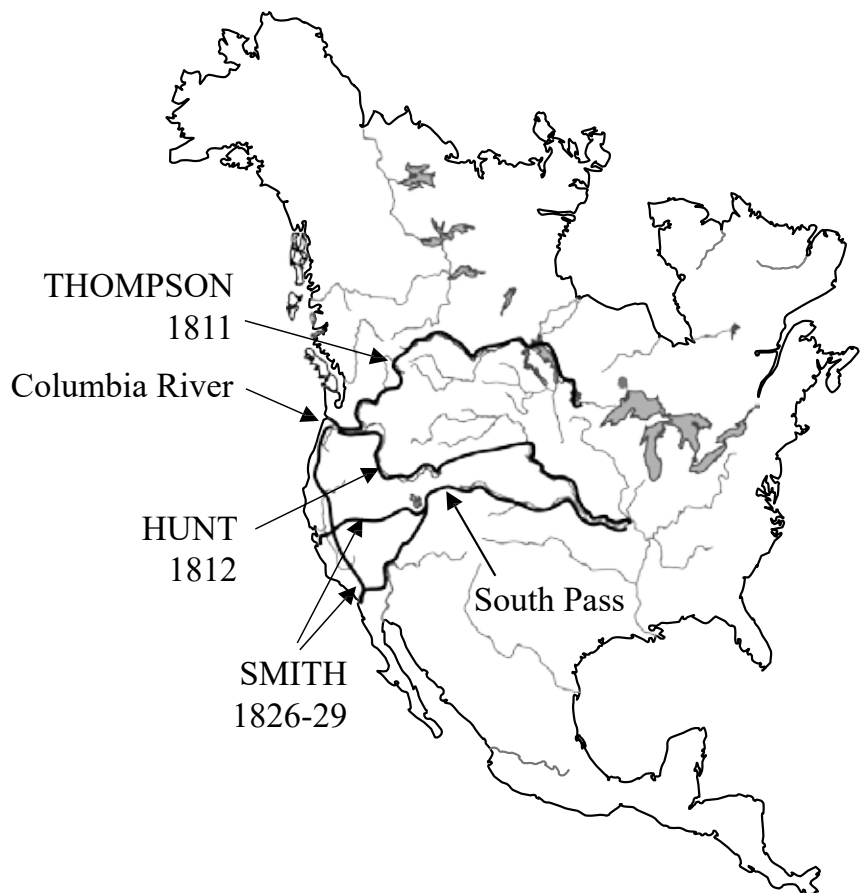
Jedediah Smith was the only one of these three to arrive at the Columbia River knowing about of the War of 1812 and the boundary Treaty of 1818. It was while Smith spent the winter of 1828-29 at Fort Vancouver when HBC Governor George Simpson learned the Multnomah River was simply the short, 150 mile Willamette River surrounded by mountains. Smith knew it was not a river rising far to the south-east and raising hope for an inland waterway leading into the Columbia River, as erroneously identified by

Lewis and Clark. Furthermore, Smith's journey along the coast from San Diego to Fort Vancouver revealed there were no substantial harbors for sea-going vessels between San Francisco and the Columbia River. Russia's second-rate harbor at Fort Ross was not a contender. Smith also advised Simpson there were dozens, even hundreds of American fur trappers and traders working the beaver country west of the Rocky Mountains in country nominally under Mexican sovereignty. Smith's expeditions deep into the south provided the last big pieces in the geographic puzzle of the west coast 22 years after Lewis and Clark had reached the Columbia River, and 17 years after Thompson and Hunt marked additional paths to the coast. Simpson and the HBC confirmed this news when Peter Skene Ogden's southern expedition of 1829 also reached San Diego. Simpson was justified in being wary of Americans approaching the Columbia River along southern and eastern routes.

Writers have criticized Hunt for his bad, unsafe decisions and dismiss his expedition as being unimportant. These critics, however, overlook a number of firsts in the Hunt expedition: this was the first large, commercial expedition to head across the continent after Lewis and Clark; Hunt visited Baranoff, resident manager of the Russian American Company at Sitka in the Alaskan archipelago to negotiate trade between them and J. J. Astor; Hunt picked up 75,000 sea otter pelts from the Pribiloff Islands and sent them to Canton in trade for Chinese goods; he brought the goods back to New York by sea in 1816. In short, Hunt actually carried out the international trade plan envisioned by Sir Alexander Mackenzie in his book of 1801 and put into effect by Astor. He was not to know that the War of 1812 would cut short this initial experiment connecting the northwest fur trade with Russia and China.

As explorers, Thompson and Smith present more exciting and longer stories than Hunt's one-time

## ROUTES BY THOMPSON, HUNT & SMITH



journey filled with incidents no one would want to repeat. As mentioned, Smith's great achievement was to close the geographic puzzle along the west coast after the gaps left by Lewis and Clark, Thompson and Hunt. Unfortunately, almost all of Smith's journals and maps disappeared after his death in 1831. A few fragments have been found over the years and in 1836 David Burr, geographer for the House of Representatives, published a map of the United States in which the western information drew extensively from Smith's records, probably by way of Ashley who was then a Congressman. Some of Smith's information also turned up in 1850 as handwritten additions to a map by army explorer John Fremont. Robert Utley in his book *A Life Wild and Perilous* estimates that "had Smith lived to carry forward the advance of his project, western mapping would have been hastened by at least a decade." This may well be the case but, alas, Smith's records were not examined by others and

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### Comparing David Thompson, Wilson Price Hunt and Jedediah Smith

do not exist today, and while acknowledging his high capability it does not make up for absence of essential records.

Thompson's route to Fort Astoria on the lower Columbia River in 1811 is more convoluted than the complicated river itself. He took longer to get there than some desk-bound historians thought reasonable and his reputation was attacked twenty years after publication in 1916 of David Thompson's Narrative of his explorations in western America 1784-1812. Finally, as Darcy Jennish points out in the *The Epic Wanderer*, Thompson is being re-evaluated during his bi-centennial period and as a result is better appreciated today. Thompson left copious notes, journals, maps, letters and sketches by which to judge his work as an explorer, surveyor and cartographer as well as his ethnographic descriptions of the many native people whom he met. These documents are housed chiefly at the Archives of Ontario and also there are important files in the National Archives of Canada and The National Archives office in Kew, London, UK.

Although not as blatant as Astor's suppression of Stuart's discovery of South Pass, the NWC did not openly make use of Thompson's great map of the west which he completed in 1814. The timing was bad because the NWC and HBC were just about to begin the period of the "Fur Trade Wars" and instead of making strategic use of Thompson's western geographical knowledge, NWC resources were diluted by conflict with the HBC. Combining Thompson's great map, if it had been available, with the Smith/Burr map would have produced a remarkable general map of the western half of the continent by 1836 or earlier if Smith's notes had not been lost, but those are the risks and losses of the time. As it happens, the large store of Thompson's journals and other papers is fortunately still providing a marvelous source of reference material. Persistence in searching for and analyzing both Hunt's and Smith's histories may bring forth information that can be linked geographically and narratively with Thompson's records, a process that so far has not been tried in documenting Thompson, Hunt and Smith.

#### Homes of retired fur traders, circa 1830



David Thompson  
Williamstown, ON



Wilson Price Hunt  
Normandy (near St. Louis, MO)



Robert Campbell  
St. Louis, MO (1851)

These fine homes illustrate that David Thompson, Wilson Price Hunt and Robert Campbell enjoyed an above average prosperity upon retiring from the frontier of the fur trade. Jedediah Smith and Robert Campbell were friends from 1822 when they were hired by William Ashley to join his western fur trade enterprise. Smith also had a house in St. Louis but it is no longer standing. The three houses shown here are now museums with unique exhibits of the original owner's involvement in the fur trade and other businesses.

## Editor's Note

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

Hello fellow members. A busy summer with the Map Team on the Jedediah Smith Digital Map Project. Editorial review by Jim Hardee and Ed Sieckert are completed and edits by Team Members are complete. The next phase is movement of files to Cartographer, Tom Jonas and Interactive Web Designer, Holly Jonas. The wall map which will be digital can be printed to a larger or smaller size for the museum, meetings or educational institutions. The interactive map will also be placed on the Society Web Site. Five Jedediah Smith map specialists were chosen for their field and research experience have plotted the approximate trails from 1822 to 1830 from St. Louis to the Pacific Coast. It has been a monumental project and will allow the view to look at key points of interest with descriptions and photographs of the place mark. Map team: Ed Sieckert, Jim Hardee, Dr. Ned Eddins, Albert Eddins, Joe Molter, James Auld. Cartographer Tom Jonas and Web Designer Holly Jonas.



### President's Message - Jim Smith, Helena, Montana



Jedediah's greatest accomplishment was arguably The Southwest Expedition, 1826-27. That first American overland expedition to California set in motion events that truly determined the course of empire on the North American continent.

Please plan to join the Jedediah Smith Society's 62nd Annual Rendezvous, October 12-14, 2018 as we re-trace significant portions of that difficult journey. Ms. Sheri Wysong will be our Trip Leader for the 2018 Rendezvous. Sheri is a Jedediah Smith Society member from Delta, Utah. She works for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), out of the Salt Lake City Office. Sheri knows the human and natural history of the Great Basin. Sheri has an overview of our 2018 Rendezvous, as well as the daily itinerary in this issue of *Castor*. (*See Events section below*). Please read it over and make plans to join us a year from now for a great Rendezvous. Watch for additional information in the next *Castor*.

In other news, the Jedediah Smith Society is forging ahead on the organizational front. 2017 will be remembered as the year the Society became incorporated as non-profit organization in the state of California; and the year it received status as a tax exempt organization from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. These are two major milestones. They are major building blocks that will serve the Society, in the furtherance of its mission well in the years to come. Board member Steve Mair worked long and hard for most of the year on both of these legal, administrative projects. Thanks very much Steve.

Enjoy this issue of *Castor* and please stay in touch.

## Events

### 2018 RENDEZVOUS - UTAH



Sheri Wysong

History books abound with stories of the Donner Party, whose story of the ill-fated crossing of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in 1846 started in Utah in Emigration Canyon and the Great Salt Desert. History also records, to a lesser extent, the Death Valley 49ers, who, three years later, left the path of the Overland trail at Enterprise Utah, to also wander across the Great Basin desert of Nevada, ultimately finding themselves trapped in the valley named for their ordeal. But few books document the ordeal that, 20 years earlier, three men: Jedediah Smith, Robert Evans and Silas Gobel had

## Events - *continued*

experienced after crossing the Sierra Nevada and the Great Basin Desert from the west. Their crossing of the Great Basin and Great Salt Lake Desert, was remarkable in that, due to the resourcefulness of Smith, the leader of the expedition, did not result in any human fatalities despite the arduous conditions.

Smith, Evans and Gobel's story began almost a year before, when Smith was the leader of a larger party that had traveled south through Utah in 1826 on their way to California, planning to travel up the coast to the Columbia River and return to the Rocky Mountains in time for the 1827 Rendezvous. Upon being detained by Mexican authorities in California, the three men left the majority of the party behind and struck out in the Spring of 1827 for the Rocky Mountains and the Rendezvous. They crossed the Sierra Nevada while it was still cloaked with snow, but reached the Great Salt Lake Desert in the summer heat, and water sources scarce. After surviving cold then thirst, they arrived at the rendezvous to announce the group was alive and well, but that more men were needed to continue the journey to the Columbia. In the ten days he was at the rendezvous, Smith assembled another party to travel back through Utah to California to reunite with the group he left behind. They followed a similar path south through Utah as they had the year before.

Much of Smith's travels through Utah were documented in his memoir and can be retraced. The Jedediah Smith Society (JSS) will, in October 2018, will retrace a mix of Smith's 1826-1827 paths through Utah, to allow participants to appreciate the hardiness of Smith, his men, and to experience the unique beauty of the terrain they traveled in the State. Memorials to Smith and his men have been placed along those trails, and in a two day trip around western Utah, the JSS will visit those memorials as well as other sites mentioned in Smith's memoirs.

### Itinerary

**Day One** (tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 13, 2018):

8:30 a.m. Compile the group in SUVs and leave the American Fork Holiday Inn Express. Follow Smith's 1827 trail to Frémont Indian State Park, stopping a Salina UT for participants to buy Subway lunches.

12:00 p.m. Reach the Frémont Indian State Park. Visit Smith's Memorial there, explore the Park, and eat lunch. The JSS will arrange for a guest speaker at the Park's conference room.

3:00 p.m. Leave the park and continue on Smith's 1826 route to Minersville, Utah. From there, the group will head up to the Border Inn for the night, arriving about 6:00 p.m. Participants are on their own for dinner – the Border Inn serves meals and there may be other possibilities in Baker, NV

**Day 2** (Sunday, October 14)

Participants are on their own for breakfast, but will be provided sack lunches prepared by the Border Inn. The group will leave around 9:00 a.m. and follow, as closely as possible, Smith's 1827 trail from the Utah-Nevada border to the Great Salt Lake (GSL), with stops at pertinent points along the way. The group will arrive at the GSL around 3:00 p.m. and visit the memorial placed by the OCTA. From there, it will make its way back to American Fork and disperse.

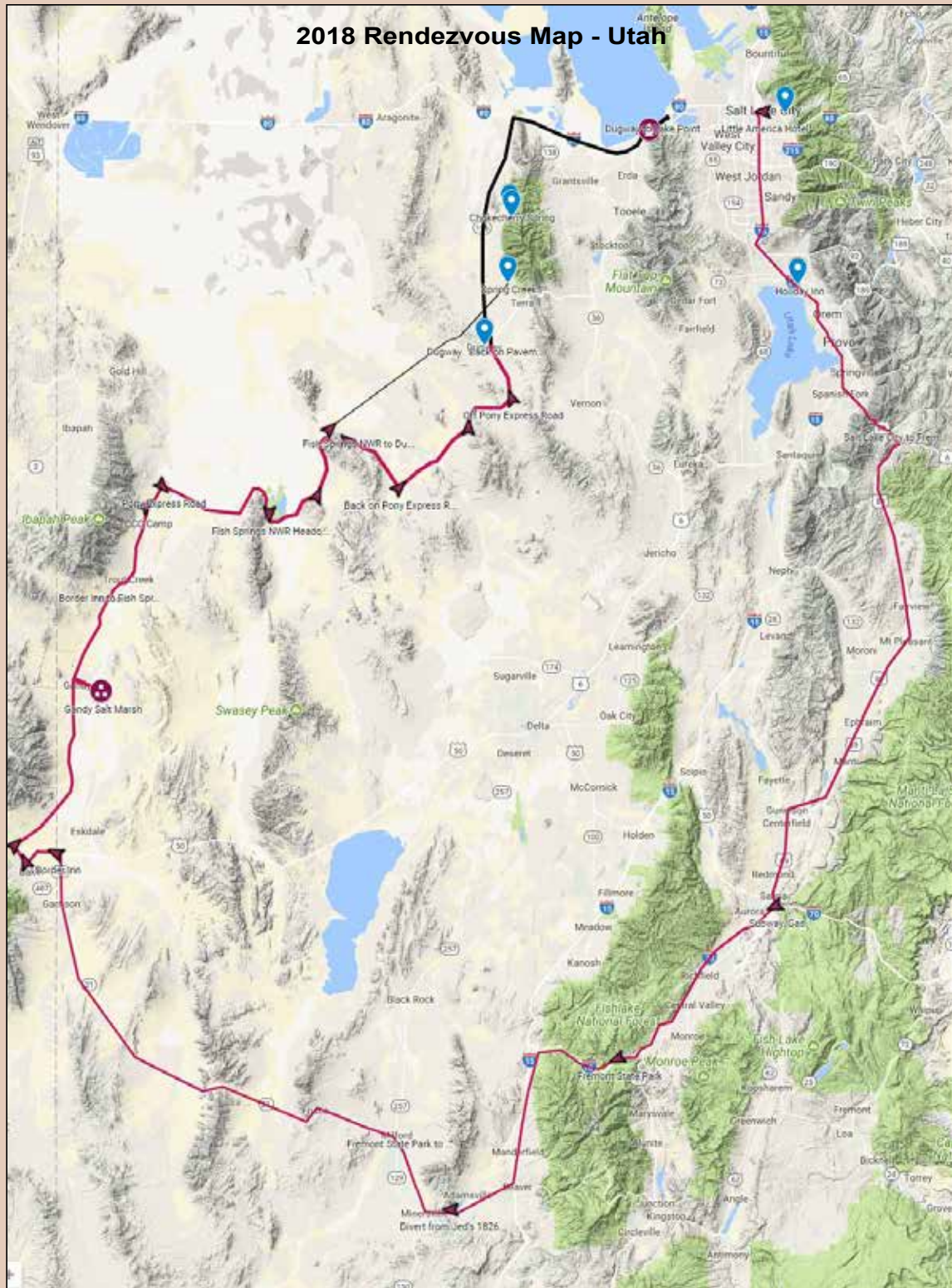
### Extras

Either before or after the JSS group event, participants may want to explore Smith's northern travels in Utah. They could stay either Thursday or Sunday night in Logan or thereabouts, check out the 1826 Rendezvous site, drive up into Idaho through Soda Springs to Georgetown where Smith, Jackson and Sublette bought out Ashley, then down the west side of Bear Lake to the 1827 Rendezvous site. At that point, depending on how much time participants want to spend driving, they could either drive 89 back to Logan and down I-15 to SLC, or down 16 to Evanston WY, then I-80 west cutting off at Emigration Canyon to Salt Lake City, right at



## Events - *continued*

Heritage Park, which has another memorial to the fur trade. The latter route would be especially striking that time of year. It would also take participants past Smith's Fork of the Bear River near Cokeville, which is named for Smith. Cokeville is the town they made the movie about a couple years ago: "The Cokeville Miracle".





Events - *continued*

## 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**

Presentations, living history encampment, and tours including Fort Clark, Fort Union, Fort Mandan and the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, featuring the art of Catlin and Bodmer.

More information will be available at [FortMandan.com](http://FortMandan.com)



## Events - *continued*

### 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.

## Wall Map and Digital Interactive Map Development

A group six JSS map specialists will work on a digital map of Jedediah Smith's explorations during the fur trade period. Ed Sieckert, coordinator; Jim Hardee, Technical Review editor; Dr. Ned Eddins and Albert Eddins worked on Montana, Wyoming, St Louis to Wyoming, Kansas and the Mojave area. Joe Molter, California; James Auld, Oregon, Washington; Sheri Wysong, Utah & Nevada. Milton von Damm and Wayne Knauf are the financial advisors. It will be interactive on the JSS web site for researchers, students, and the public. The map team is getting closer to finalizing the interactive portion of the map.

## Committee Position Available

### 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.

## Archives Corner *from Ed Sieckert*

### Holt-Atherton Special Collections University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA

### Pacific Historian

The well noted History journal publication of the University of the Pacific is now online  
**Thanks** to Nicole Grady, Special Collections, Librarian. There are many articles written about Jedediah Smith.

To view these individual Quarterly journals on your browser go to:

1. University of the Pacific - Library
2. Holt-Atherton Special Collections
3. Search Digital Archive Collections
4. Select Western Americana
5. Select Pacific Historian and then the year you want.

You also may see the journals on the JSS web site link and it will take you directly to the UOP site.

## Archives Corner - *continued*

### WHO WAS CARL WHEAT?

Carl Wheat was an attorney in San Francisco, California and well known for his love of western history including maps. His most notable book is *Jedediah Smith and His Maps of the American West* co-authored with Dale Morgan. The David Burr (1839 map) and the Fremont-Smith Gibbs Map of 1842 is included in this book with great detail.

This tribute to Carl Wheat was written by Dr. James Shebl, Professor of Literature emeritus, University of the Pacific and longtime Jedediah Smith Society member and board member. This tribute was placed as part of the “Enigmatical Book of Vitus” of the E. Clampus Vitus organization.

### A Dedication To The Memory Of CARL IRVING WHEAT 1892 - 1966 by JAMES SHEBL University of the Pacific

STUDENTS OF THE AMERICAN WEST owe enduring debts to the nonprofessional historians who have made significant contributions to our understanding of the past. An outstanding example was Carl Irving Wheat, who set a standard for historical cartography with the publication of his monumental study, *Mapping the Transmississippi West*, which appeared in five volumes between 1957 and 1963. The graphic series stands in tribute both to the scholar and to the land whose mysteries he sought to decipher. Wheat was a highly successful attorney with a dynamic personality whose romance with history spanned fifty years and involved him in various roles and projects that greatly expanded the horizons and appreciation of the Western field.

Carl Wheat was born in Holliston, Massachusetts, on December 5, 1892; the only child of Frank Irving and Catherine Pierce Wheat. Six years later his father, a Congregational minister, accepted the pulpit of the Park Congregational Church in San Francisco and moved the family west. Invited in 1902 to be a pastor at Gavanza—a short distance from Pasadena—Reverend Wheat resettled there, but remained in the ministry only a few years, before entering the business world. Young Carl attended Occidental Academy, then went on to Pomona College, where he worked on the student newspaper and earned a Phi Beta Kappa key. He published an article entitled “The Snake Dance at Walpi, 1913,” in Pomona’s *Student Life* magazine in 1913; lived briefly on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona; and wrote and presented a

play, “The Gods Are Good,” about his experience. Wheat graduated in 1915 with a degree in philosophy.

After duty in France during World War I with the American Ambulance Service and the Army Air Service, Carl entered Harvard Law School. On September 22, 1919, he married Helen Millspaugh.

The couple subsequently had two sons, Francis Millspaugh and Richard Pierce. After receiving his law degree from Harvard, Wheat headed back to California, passed the state bar exam, and began his career in Los Angeles with the law firm of O’Melveny, Millikin & Tuller.

In 1922 Carl Wheat was employed by the California Railroad Commission (now the Public Utilities Commission), and served as its chief counsel for five years (1924-1929). He then opened a private practice in San Francisco, but returned to the Public Utilities Commission in 1934. After a stint with the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C. (1936-1938), Wheat settled in Los Angeles, specializing in public utility law. He also maintained offices in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Wheat apparently became interested in the historical landscape while traveling through the Mother Lode country in California as an employee of the State Railroad Commission. Using maps to study land and water issues, he developed a keen sense of perspective





## Archives Corner - *continued*

and place. This experience also fitted well with Wheat's interest in hiking and camping and his enjoyment of the outdoors. Although in later years he acknowledged the reading of Walter Colton's *Three Years in California* as the genesis of his interest, the major catalyst for his plunge into history was his association with Henry R. Wagner, attorney and historian, then living in Berkeley. Wagner was a leading California bibliophile and an authority on diverse aspects of Western cartography and history. Animated by Wagner's knowledge and personality, Wheat began researching and writing historical sketches, collecting rare books, and printing short works in limited editions. He joined the California Historical Society in 1924 and published "A Sketch of the Life of Theodore D. Judah" in its *Quarterly* in 1925, which his Wheatstalk Press reprinted as a pamphlet. He became a director of the Society in 1926 and served as editor of the *Quarterly* from 1927 to 1934. Wheat collected from the *Pioneer Magazine* (1854-1855) a set of letters written by Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe ("Dame Shirley"), provided an introduction and notes, and the Grabhorn Press published the two-volume limited edition in 1933. When he returned to Los Angeles in 1934, Wheat edited the Historical Society of Southern California *Quarterly* for two years before he left for Washington D.C.

Wheat not only sought history through research, but he made history as well. In 1931, in company with Leon O. Whitsell and G. Ezra Dane, attorneys who shared his regard for local history, he revived the ancient and honorable order of *E Clampus Vitus*. This organization had been founded in California in 1857 to burlesque the staid fraternal societies of that day. Its members, called "Clampers," formed chapters and engaged in charitable activities in various mining camps. Wheat and his friends reestablished the order for fun and fellowship, to recapture gold rush lore, and to search out and mark historical sites. Organizing the first chapter in San Francisco-Yerba Buena No. 1-Wheat in 1934 published *The Enigmatic Book of Vitus* to give the order meaning and publicity. Clampers included a precarious union of most unlikely personalities-tinkers, professors, stockbrokers, farmers, bus drivers, physicians, and many others-men who were captivated by the West and enjoyed an occasional sip of the grape.

Wheat's delightful sense of humor and reputation for light address and intellectual amusement did not deter him from more serious efforts. With his appreciation of learning and fellowship, he quickly infused life into every organization he joined. He was a member and, in some cases, a director and an officer of the Book Club of California, Friends of Bancroft Library, the American Antiquarian Society, the Zamarano Club, the Roxburghe Club, the State Historical Landmarks Committee, and the Federal Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments.

Wheat's preoccupation with maps was not unusual. As an attorney, he appreciated the fact that maps were collated evidence put into perspective by the mapmaker. Also, he was easily attracted by the certain romance associated with old maps. His first serious, book-length venture into the Western field was *Maps of the California Region*, published by the distinguished Grabhorn Press in 1942. Therein he embraced a quest that would find expression in other publications in the years ahead. In *Books of the California Gold Rush* (1949), Wheat mirrored his deepening commitment as a collector and historian of the Western scene.

The greatest discovery of Wheat's lifetime occurred in 1953 while he was browsing in the stacks of the American Geographic Society. There he stumbled upon a copy of John C. Fremont's 1845 map of his first and second expeditions. A careful examination and study uncovered pen and pencil annotations by George Gibbs, an early mapmaker and ethnological researcher. But the notations revealed more. Here indeed was a detail of the lost map of explorer Jedediah Smith! This astonishing discovery was made the same year that Dale Morgan's excellent study, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, appeared. The next year, Wheat and Morgan coauthored a book on Jedediah Smith's maps, published by the California Historical Society.

In 1957 Wheat established the Institute of Historical Geography, a nonprofit organization, as a vehicle to publish a comprehensive study of the cartography of the American West. He took this singular route so as to have full control over the project, even down to selecting the format and type style. He hoped that in time the institute would foster additional research in the field of historic maps and mapmaking. Wheat announced his

## Archives Corner - *continued*

intentions in *Mapping the American West, 1540-1857: A Preliminary Study* (1954).

During the years 1957-1963, Carl Wheat published his magnum opus, *Mapping the Transmississippi West, 1540-1861*, which ran to five volumes. He opened his graphic production with Coronado's entrada of 1540 and concluded with G. L. Holt's 1884 map of Wyoming. The fifth volume (in two parts) actually covered the period, 1861-1884. In these volumes, Wheat described the maps of Lewis and Clark, Jedediah Smith, and John C. Fremont; the maps of the Mexican War, Gold Rush, railroad survey, Great Plains settlement, Mormon migration, and government wagon roads; and the maps of the Wheeler surveys and of the Indian nations. In all, Wheat reproduced 363 maps and listed a total of 1,302 in his bibliocartography. In his running narrative, he sought to correlate the maps with the impulses of the men who, under different flags, explored that curious phenomenon called "The West." He discussed each map, outlined its origin, and weighed its accuracy and significance. The technical detail was flawless. Wheat wrote with both confidence and enthusiasm-and well he might. *Mapping the Transmississippi West* was a definitive presentation of extraordinary merit.

Carl Wheat lived a busy life. In acknowledgment of his extraordinary contributions to Western history (his bibliography ultimately contained 116 titles), he was named the first recipient of the Henry R. Wagner Memorial Medal given by the California Historical Society in 1959. An honorary trustee at Pomona College, he was awarded an honorary LL.D. degree by that institution the same year. On June 23, 1966, Wheat died at his Menlo Park home from complications of a stroke he had suffered several years earlier.

Carl Wheat left his mark on Western history in many ways. Over the years myriad scholars have consulted the volumes in his *Mapping the Transmississippi West* for information; historians and buffs have read his works with profit and enjoyed fellowship in organizations that he helped revitalize. A true Renaissance man who enjoyed rare books, fine printing, and the outdoors, and whose publications mirrored a mature appreciation for the nation's formative years, Carl I. Wheat proved that a romance with the West can produce high adventure.

### A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF

### CARL IRVING WHEAT RELATING TO THE AMERICAN WEST

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## Members' Book Corner

### Book Review by Ed Sieckert



*Jedediah Smith's blacksmiths make a bear trap for San Gabriel Mission. From Carl Russell's Firearms, Traps...*

### WAGH! ABOUT FIXINS MOUNTAIN MEN USED

*Firearms, Traps, and Tools of the Mountain Men* by Carl P. Russell (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967); 448 pp. plus index, illus., biblio.; \$12.50.

Reviewer: R. Coke Wood, Secretary of the Jedediah Smith Society and Director of the Pacific Center for Western Historical Studies, Stockton, Calif.

Dr. Russell's death last year took from scholarship its most dedicated student of the Mountain Man's vocational impedimenta. Conservationists know him as a man whose career was in that field, with special successes as superintendent of the Yosemite National Park. But he has a secure place among historians of the West for his *Guns on the Early Frontier* and, now, this highly documented but very readable account of the artifacts used by trappers.

Quite properly, man's foibles in haberdashery come up for attention in chapter one. Hatters of the world had raised a cry for beaver long before Lewis and Clark, and Mountain Men moved in to supply the demand. As many as 100,000 beaver were consumed a year, then *Wagh!* The market evaporated. Some pesky furriner (the pun if any is unintended) had discovered how to make silk hats. Suddenly the old trade was *gone beaver!*

The significance of castor in international politics is very skilfully sketched, with Jedediah Smith in the forefront. In 1828 he had soothed fears of Governor Simpson, at the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver, by expressing doubt that families from the United States could make the difficult journey in wagons to Willamette Valley. But in 1830 Smith was not at all pessimistic in reporting to the U.S. War Department. And he trod on sound ground when he protested joint American-British occupancy: "The British . . . confine the business to the territory of the United States. . . if they are not stopped from trapping, that country will soon be stripped of beaver."

Though this book will compete with many another for its flowing style, it promises to become the No. 1 reference volume on technical details overlooked by most authors. Descriptions of guns and traps and tools are complemented by excellent line sketches. Here are diagrams of hats, swivel guns for pirogues, small cannons, long rifles, Indian trade guns, beaver traps, fur presses, knives, tomahawks, and axes of every kind. Students of Jedediah Smith's career will be grateful to Dr. Russell for his illuminating appraisal in the chapter on "The Mountain Man in American History." Here pass as in parade many names associated with the early frontier. But Jed Smith's break-through to California in 1826 is seen as triggering forces that shaped the lives of many hardy men and helped set the pattern for the course of empire.

Ref. *The Pacific Historian*, Winter 1968

### The Fur Trade, A History of Arms and Trade Goods, by Milton von Damm

#### THE FUR TRADE



#### A HISTORY OF ARMS AND TRADE GOODS

Based on the Private Collection of Milton von Damm

This book is a history of the Fur Trade Guns and trade goods in an industry that constituted a notable segment on North America's economy in its infancy and early adolescence. It is also an important ingredient of internal and external political and military conflict between nations and between the Native Americans and Manifest Destiny. Includes 460 color photographs of arms and trade goods, brief historical references to the Fur Trade in New France, The Hudson's Bay Company, The American Fur Company and the U. S. Government. Rifle makers include Dicker-Gill, Christopher Gumph, Henry Gibbs, Peter Gonter, James Henry, George Tyron and others. The photography is outstanding and this is an invaluable resource for the student, collector or artist.

Available from:

Milton von Damm, 1681 Visalia Ave. Berkeley, Ca 94707.

Contact by email first: [mvondamm@gmail.com](mailto:mvondamm@gmail.com)



## Jedediah Smith Monuments - Salt Lake City, Utah

The Jedediah Smith Monument at the South East corner of the Great Salt Lake was stolen a number of years ago. This monument was established by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Colonists. Lynne Turner was key in getting it established.



Daughter of American Colonists, Front: Elvira White, Lynne Turner, Anastasia Steere, Shirley Nelson, Jerry Niederhause, Louise Hollander, Mountain Men Include: Jason Peterson, Ferrell Peterson, Ole Jensen, Todd Glover, Michael Powell, Rick Williams, Roy Hansen, Charles Rauch.



Members are: From left Terry Welch, George Billings, Oscar Olsen, Linda Turner, Jesse Peterson, Victor Heath, (Bryce Billings taking photo). All members of the Utah Crossroads Chapter of the Oregon California Trails Association OCTA placing Jedediah Smith T-Rail Post on 8.31.17

Linda Turner, her daughter and current JSS member in Salt Lake City, has been successful in working with OCTA-Utah Crossroads Chapter, National Society of Daughters of the American Colonists and the Jedediah Smith Society. Thanks Linda so much for your tireless effort.

What is special about this monument is the wording taken from Jedediah Smith's Journal on his trips into this area 1826-1827. From George R. Brooks *The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith 1977*. page 193.

**"COMING TO THE POINT OF THE RIDGE (TIMPLE POINT) .. I SAW AN EXPANSE OF WATER EXTENDING FAR TO THE NORTH AND EAST... THE SALT LAKE A JOYFUL SITE WAS SPREAD BEFORE US.. I HAD TRAVELLED SO MUCH IN THE VICINITY OF THE SALT LAKE THAT IT HAD BECOME MY HOME OF THE WILDERNESS. AFTER COMING IN VIEW OF THE LAKE I TRAVELED EAST [AND] FOUND A SPRING OF FRESH WATER AND ENCAMPED."**  
**JEDEDIAH SMITH JUNE 27, 1827.**



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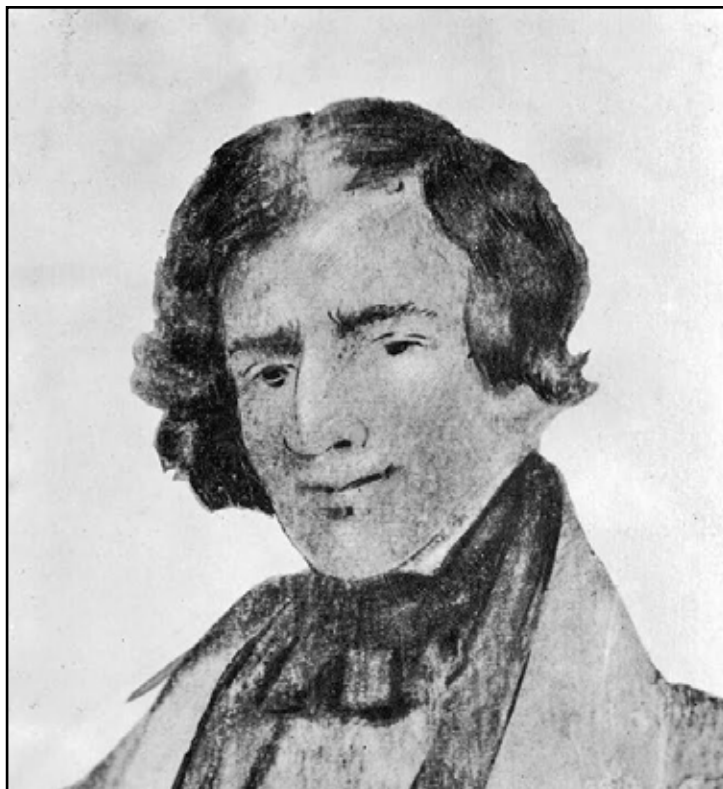
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