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Jedediah Strong Smith

“California’s Debt to Jedediah Strong Smith”

By Phil Townsend Hanna – in *Touring Topics*, 1926

A century has passed since Jed Smith trekked his weary way across the scintillating sands of the Mojave Desert to give to California its first land contact with the then youthful and aspiring States of the Mississippi Valley and the Atlantic seaboard. The flowers of the desert he was so familiar with have bloomed and died a hundred times; the Indians to whom he traded baubles for furs and horses have, in the main, succumbed before the encroaching hordes of Americans who followed his footsteps into the land of eternal promise and perpetual fulfillment. The life of Jedediah Strong Smith and his voyages comprise a captivating drama, replete with tragedy and not without its crudely comic interludes—an episode so important in the unfolding of the greater drama of the conquest and settlement of California that it has left its impress most forcibly on the consciousness of all those interested in tracing the development of the Golden State. Ten decades have come and California only now is beginning to recognize the tremendous debt it owes the intrepid and courageous explorer-trader.

Colorful and romantic as were the voyages of Cabrillo-Vizcaino-Portola and the Fathers Serra and Crespi, they contributed little to the commercial, industrial and agricultural advancement of California.

They were, essentially, great adventures, Cabrillo and Vizcaino sought the phantom wealth of Cibola’s seven cities; Drake was a notorious free-booter and pirate; the Fathers Serra and Crespi, with the soldier Portola, were assigned the dual task of converting the Indians and colonizing the new land.

Dissension between the military and the clergy prevented both from completely accomplishing their goal. Smith on the other hand, was a trader pure and simple. At a time when California officials, ever fearful of foreigners, had forbidden trade between the natives and other nationals, Smith came upon the scene, inflated the cupidity of the Californians and sowed the seed for trade between the United States and California and the ultimate annexation of California to the ambitious, albeit youthful, new Nordic republic, for the aphorism that the flag follows the trader has proven to be an eternal verity more often than otherwise.

Smith’s life was a short one and a hardy one. Homes for the indigent and the aged were unnecessary in pioneer times. Few lived long enough to grow old or needy. Unrelenting nature ruthlessly swept down those with the temerity to appropriate her domain. The spirit and philosophy of the period is best exemplified by the colloquy which tradition puts into the mouths of an early trapper and his comrade, and successively to the cowboy and the miner who followed. The former had been wounded by the arrows of the Indians and was lamenting his eminent demise. The friend’s sole consolation amounted to, “H___, yuh didn’t expect to live

forever, did yuh?" Stoicism was the only mental attitude with which the adventurous might face the great unknown.

On an early April morning in 1822, Jedediah Strong Smith departed from Cincinnati with the illusion and hopes and the optimism of youth to seek fame and fortune in the lap of the little known and then mysterious Great West. On a May afternoon in 1831, he was murdered on the banks of the Cimarron River by a band of hostile Indians. For nine years—a short period as time goes—he had braved the perils of the mountains, the deserts and the plains; twice made extended circle journeys about the Pacific Coast; twice escaped Indian massacres when virtually all of his party were slain; fought death from starvation, thirst, and the Indians, and of infinitely greater import, had established overland communications with the Mexican colony of California that later was to stimulate wide-spread emigration to the new land and completely change the map of the North American continent.

Smith was one of those restless human organisms that dot the pages of history with their deeds of high enterprise and courage. Motivated by the commercial instincts of the typical Yankee traders who only then were beginning to become important factors in the national life, Smith differed from the many explorers who preceded and succeeded him. His were not purposeless wanderings—the response to an undefinable urge. Every foot he trod was designed to enhance his personal fortunes and those of his associates, and it was the pursuance of this ideal that led him to California. The “lure of the sunset” and a consummate interest in the great unpenetrated southwest doubtless influenced Smith to make his epochal voyages, but the more material necessity for seeking sources for furs and extending trade, of a certainty, was the dominating objective of his journeys.

The fever of the fur traffic, with the promise of vast fortunes to be made by those who engaged in it, was abroad in the land during the decade 1820-1830. Like a huge magnet the Far West tugged at the restless ones, ever receptive to influences that augured prosperity. To Jed Smith, born with the germ of incipient nomadism, it proved overpowering. Smith was the son of a New England divine—one of twelve children. Born in Bainbridge, New York, and late of Ashtabula, Ohio, at the age of twenty-four he responded to the irresistible call of the far places and enlisted as a trapper with William Henry Ashley and Major Andrew Henry for service in the wilds about the headquarters of the Missouri River and its tributaries. His initiation into the vicissitudes of the fur trade occurred in 1823. For three and one-half years he covered the Missouri territory. He was a member of the first party to cross the Continental Divide through South Pass; engaged in numerous frays with belligerent Rees, Assiniboines and Crows; suffered from the vagaries of the weather, from thirst and starvation and manifold physical discomforts and withal, acquired a wealth of experience that was destined to guide him through his remaining years—as eventful as they were few. In July 1826, General Ashley retired from the fur trade, assigning his interests to David E. Jackson, William L. Sublette, and Jedediah Strong Smith—the three of the more than 300 men whom he had employed from time to time, who appeared best fitted to carry on the enterprise. The basins of the Green, the Bear, the Weber, and the Snake still held a tremendous quantity of fur, but the unknown land, south and west of the Great Salt

Lake beckoned like some will o' the wisp with even greater possibilities. The success of the Hudson Bay Company along the Columbia River was fresh in the minds of the trio. Might not another river be found rolling southwesterly that would prove a second Columbia? Might it not furnish a fine artery for trade with California, or possibly provide a quicker and better route for the transportation of furs to the New England market? These questions the new trappers asked themselves and the potentialities were sufficiently rosy to warrant an extensive investigation.

Smith's innate shrewdness, extraordinary courage and his gift for leadership made him the logical commander for the exploring expedition. Accordingly he departed from the headquarters of the new company in the vicinity of the northeastern shore of Salt Lake on August 22, 1826. Southward he turned the caravan of 15 men and 50 horses for a journey that was to take them a year, the bald and unembellished chronicle of which provides a tale as thrilling and as full of incident as Alexander's conquest of Persia or Marco Polo's invasion of the realm of Kublai Khan. Down the valley of the Jordan River the party traveled, bearing along the eastern shore of Utah Lake and thence southwest across the plains. The Sevier River, flowing north, was encountered during September, Smith naming it Ashley River and assuming that it emptied into Utah Lake—an erroneous assumption as time proved. Up the valley, ever southward, the party continued. Big game was becoming scarce but black-tailed hares were sufficiently abundant to provide meat for the men. At the headquarters of the Sevier the party crossed the mountains and followed the Virgin River, which Smith named the "Adam's River in compliment to our President." Barren country met them as they beat southward through the Valley of the Virgin. Grass was infrequently found, the horses were becoming lean and food for the party was scarce. The journey down the Virgin to the Colorado required 12 days. At the confluence of the two streams, the party crossed the latter, Smith calling it the Seedskeeder (Siskadee) identifying it with the remote Green River. After four days march along the east bank of the Colorado, during which the men were victims of partial starvation, the group arrived at the Mojave villages near the present Needles—a fertile spot that provided the Indians with corn, wheat, melons, etc.

"I was now nearly destitute of horses," Smith wrote in a letter describing the trip, "and had learned what it was to do without food. I, therefore, remained there 15 days and recruited my men, and I was enabled also to exchange my horses and purchase a few more off a few run away Indians who stole from the Spaniards. I here got information of the Spanish counties, obtained two good guides and re-crossed the Seedskeeder (Siskadee) which I afterward found emptied into the Gulf of California by the name of the Collarado." Smith resumed his journey during the first week of November, crossing to the west bank of the Colorado in the vicinity of Needles and proceeding due westward over much the same general territory as that now traversed by the National Old Trails Highway and the Santa Fe Railroad; even so late in the year, the desert heat and the absence of food and water wreaked havoc with the men and the horses.

Reaching the San Bernardino Mountains the party passed through Cajon Pass, arriving at San Gabriel Mission on November 27, five months after leaving Salt Lake. It is interesting to digress at this point and consider that the same journey may now be made by automobile most comfortably in three days or by airplane in 5 ½ hours. The party was received with cordiality by

the padres of the mission, but the civil authorities were suspicious of every foreigner that entered California—a fear engendered by the Russian occupation of Northern California and the British settlement at the mouth of the Columbia River—and here Smith learned that he must have permission before continuing northward. Addressing Governor José Maria de Echeandia at San Diego, Smith represented with no little dissimulation that the party has been “compelled for want of food and provisions to enter California.” The time was one of perpetual *mañana*. The answer to Smith’s request that was expected in four days failed to arrive for a month and in the interim the party remained at the mission, fêted and entertained in regal fashion. Finally the explorer was summoned to appear before Governor Echeandia in person at San Diego. After interminable interviews and petty formalities, Smith received the coveted permission to continue his journey, returning from San Diego to San Pedro on a British ship and joining his party at the mission. On January 18th—almost two months after arriving at San Gabriel, the party was again on its way, having bought fresh horses at Los Angeles and engaged in small trade with the natives. Retracing their steps they again traversed the Cajon Pass, arriving on the desert they turned northwestward. Three days travel through the San Joaquin Valley brought them to the Stanislaus River. Smith was now anxious to return to his partners at Salt Lake and he essayed to cross the Sierra. The first attempt participated in by the entire party failed by virtue of the heavy snow that covered the mountain and Smith returned to the valley. Leaving the party and with but two companions he made a second attempt which was successful. Crossing in the vicinity of the headwaters of the Stanislaus, a twenty-day journey brought him to Salt Lake. The quest for fur had proven a failure but the opportunities for trade in the new land appeared most alluring to Smith and justified from his first voyage when he set out again. Traversing the same route as the previous year Smith departed from Bear Lake on July 17, 1827 with a party of nineteen men and two Indian women. The Mojaves had proven friendly in 1826 and Smith decided to spend a few days with them. Between his previous journey and his present, however, they had become hostile. Whether this hostility was induced by their natural antipathy for the white man or whether it was inspired, as some historians assert, by Governor Echeandia who, it is said, ordered the Mojaves to stop any Americans California bound, is debatable. The fact remains that as the party was departing across the Colorado on reed rafts, they were set upon and ten were killed. Smith and those who escaped made haste for San Gabriel. At the latter point he reported to the authorities by letter, purchased necessary supplies and pushed up the San Joaquin Valley to rejoin the eleven men left the previous year. Smith found them half-starved and it became necessary for him again to appeal to the Mexican authorities for aid. On arrival at San Jose Mission he was arrested, but was permitted to address a letter to Governor Echeandia, then stationed at Monterey. Two weeks later he was escorted to Monterey at the Governor’s request, where he was finally given his liberty on a bond of \$30,000, promising to leave California within 60 days. The men he had left on the Stanislaus were brought to San Francisco and the party set out up the Sacramento River. Finding no suitable pass eastward they decided to make for the Columbia. Across the Coast Range they traveled, fording the Trinity and the Klamath River at the point where it entered the ocean. Thence they started up the coast, leaving Mexican territory

behind on June 23. On July 12 the little group started across the Umpqua River, accompanied by some 50 Indians. One of these stole an axe and Smith ordered him tied up. Unfortunately, he proved to be a chief. Two days later while Smith was absent from camp seeking a trail northward, the Indians avenged the alleged insult by swooping down on the party and murdering fifteen—only two aside from Smith and his companion escaping. Several days thereafter, Smith arrived at Fort Vancouver where he rejoined the survivors of the massacre. Dr. John McLoughlin, factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, succeeded in retrieving for Smith the furs and equipment he had, of necessity, been forced to abandon to the Indians. After spending the winter 1828-1829 at Fort Vancouver as a guest of Dr. McLoughlin, Smith continued his journey, heading up the Columbia River. Sublette and Jackson, apprehensive over the long departure of Smith, in the meantime had set out toward the upper reaches of the Snake to seek him. They passed up the Wind River and down into Jackson's Hole. Smith had by this time reached Pierre's Hole, in the vicinity, where the three partners were soon reunited. In 1830, the business of the trio was sold to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and the partners returned to St. Louis. The fur trade was growing precarious but Smith's flair for adventure still was unsatiated. Trade between St. Louis and Santa Fe promised wealth and intrigued him. On April 10, 1831, with Sublette and Jackson, he organized a wagon train and set forth from St. Louis with 85 men, 22 loaded wagons and a 6-pound cannon, Taos and Santa Fe being the destination. At Independence, Missouri, the train struck out over the Old Santa Fe Trail, fording the Arkansas River, 392 miles west, in about six weeks. Just ahead lay 60 miles of desolate desert. Wagon trains customarily laid in a good supply of water here, but apparently Smith neglected this precaution. As a result, within two days after leaving the Arkansas, the party began to suffer from thirst and the animals started to die. Smith at last determined to follow one of the numerous buffalo paths alone in the hope that it would lead to water. Leaving the train, he journeyed across the plain, after a hot and arduous trip reaching the Cimarron. No surface water was available, so he scooped a hollow in the sands with his hands. While drinking from the little pool thus created, his body was filled with the arrows of a group of Comanches who had been awaiting him in ambush. Although mortally wounded, he killed three of the savages before he was overcome. Thus on May 27, 1831, perished Jedediah Strong Smith. It is significant to note the influence Smith's pioneer journeys had upon the location of the avenue of transport that followed. The Arrowhead Trail, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Air Mail all followed the same general route over which Smith proceeded from Salt Lake to Southern Calif. The Mormon migration from Salt Lake to San Bernardino followed in his path and today thousands of motorists annually roll over the deserts and mountains he so laboriously traversed, on their visits to Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park and the Cedar Breaks. In celebrating the centenary of Smith's journey, Southern California will grant merited, if belated, acknowledgement to a great man who had a great vision and who accomplished a great task.

Jedediah Strong Smith **The Pathfinder of the Sierras**

by Velda Barnes, B.A. and Lewis B. Lesley, M.A., Assistant Prof. of History, Pomona College
in The Pomona College Quarterly Magazine, Claremont, California, June 1926 and October
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This year celebrates the centennial of the arrival of Captain Jedediah Strong Smith in California. It was on November 27, 1826, that he with his company of trappers, arrived at the San Gabriel Mission, the first American to reach California by the overland route. Of all the explorers of the vast West, there was not a braver, more noble soul than Smith. Ostensibly he was a fur trader, but in reality he was more than this; he was a blazer of trails into a country previously unexplored by Americans. Christianity and heroism were combined in proper proportions in this man, making him a truly great character. The soothing teachings of his Bible were adhered to always, until necessity demanded the vigorous use of his other constant companion—the rifle.

Jedediah Smith came from a family of pioneer Scotch stock. He was born in Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York, on June 24, 1798, the eldest of a family of fourteen children. His early boyhood was spent in Ohio, under genuine pioneer conditions. His instructor, a certain Dr. Simons, gave him the rudiments of an education which included some Latin. Dr. Simons has been given the credit of suggesting to Smith the desirability of exploring the West and of making careful geographical studies. It was this physician who also gave him his early religious training and who taught him to love the Scriptures. At the age of thirteen Jedediah accepted a position as clerk on a freight-boat on the Great Lakes. He was then at the impressionable age when the tales of the traders and trappers of the British fur companies were shaping his life, bringing him to the decision that he also should brave the dangers of the wilderness. Smith had a natural roving disposition plus a determination to better himself. In his desire for improvement he went, in 1822, to St. Louis which was then the center of far western fur trade activities. Arriving too late to join the Henry-Ashley party which had just left for the source of the Missouri, he remained at St. Louis, gathering all of the geographical information possible about the great northwest and southwest. All this information he noted down on a map, which showed a triangular space with an apex on the Upper Platte, one leg extending to the mouth of the Columbia, and the other reaching out toward the Gulf of California. This vast region remained blank on his map and inspired him to exploration in order to ascertain the nature of the land.

The actual travels of Smith began in 1823, when he joined the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, which was under the direction of General Ashley. The first we hear definitely of Smith is of the brave part he took in an Indian war with the Arikaras in 1823. The next year he was trapping on the Yellowstone and Snake Rivers. The spring of 1826 marks the date when Smith, with Ashley, again left St. Louis. This proved to be the time when Smith was entering on a journey which was to carry him, the first American, from the Mississippi to the Pacific by a

central route. On arriving at the Great Salt Lake, the journey terminated for Gen. Ashley. As had been agreed before leaving St. Louis, Ashley transferred his rights in the company to Smith, who, with David E. Jackson and William L. Sublette, was to carry on the work of the company in virgin soil, as well as in the old field. Although there was plenty of trapping in the old region, Smith was not content. He was ambitious to press on farther. The lure of the unknown was ever present with him. The company desired to know what possibilities there were for fur trade in the region to the southwest of the Great Salt Lake, and perhaps their leader had a vision of setting up a trading post on the Pacific Coast. It would have been a poor business move to send the entire company into a virgin field; hence, it was decided to leave the major portion to work over the old ground, and to send on a small group to explore and to report whether conditions were favorable for trapping. Jedediah Smith was chosen to lead the pioneer group since he had already a slight knowledge of the country. Smith was also the best educated of the three partners, a man of wide experience, with courage enough to carry through his plans; hence, better able to deal with the Mexicans who were in control of California. The impelling motive of the move into California was primarily economic, but the leader was urged on not only for economic reasons, but because the lure of adventure had possession of him.

Thus it was that on August 22, 1826, fifteen men under the command of Smith left the Great Salt Lake to explore the unknown country of the southwest. The route taken was south to Utah Lake, down the Sevier Valley to a river which Smith called the Adams, in honor of the President. This river was renamed the Virgin, on Smith's second trip, in honor of Thomas Virgin, one of Smith's men. In this region of the Virgin, there were no buffalo; only a few antelope and mountain sheep, but an abundance of black-tailed hares. On the hike down the bank of the muddy Virgin River, great salt caves were discovered. Smith describes the large cave as having an entrance "which is about 10 or 15 feet high, and 5 or 6 feet in width; after descending about 15 feet a room opens out from 25 to 30 feet in length and 15 to 20 feet in width; the roof, sides and floor are solid rock salt."

From the Virgin River the party followed the Colorado River, crossing the east bank to the Mojave Indians. Smith himself described these Indians graphically in the following words: "I found here a nation of Indians who call themselves the Ammuchabas; they cultivate the soil, raise corn, bean, pumpkins, watermelons and muskmelons in abundance and also a little wheat and cotton. I was nearly destitute of horses, and had learned what it was to do without food; I therefore remained there for fifteen days and recruited my men, and was enabled also to exchange my horses and purchase a few more off a few runaway Indians who stole some horses of the Spaniards." Leaving the Mojaves, Smith re-crossed the Colorado at Needles. This was the moment when he first stepped on California soil. Estimations from data given in a letter written by Smith to General William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, would fix this date of entrance as November 12, 1826. From Needles the route taken was westward across the Mojave on approximately the present route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. The desert was crossed with much suffering and hardship. A great salt plain twenty miles long and eight miles wide was the first barrier to be overcome. November 27, 1826, Smith and his men arrived

at San Gabriel Mission, by way of Cajon Pass. The priests were very courteous and kind to Smith and his party in spite of the fact that the Americans were Protestants. Father José Bernardo Sanchez, who was in charge of the mission, became a real friend to the group. A cow was killed to celebrate the arrival of the party, and a great deal of food cooked in their honor. Their clothing was torn and ragged as a result of the hardships of the trail, but the days spent at the mission were pleasant and restful. An early morning wedding was attended by Smith and Harrison G. Rogers, both of whom enjoyed the affair although they felt out of place in their old clothes which gave them, (to quote from Rogers' journal) "a very grotesque appearance when seated at the tables among the dandys with their ruffles, silks and broadcloths." Rogers was next in command of the travelers. He faithfully kept a diary of the two California trips entering all events of note as well as interesting details. It is due to his work that we are able to learn the facts of Jedediah's travels.

The mission at San Gabriel, the fourth of the Upper California missions, was established in 1771. The mission, at the height of its prosperity when Smith arrived, made a lasting impression on the Americans. Rogers describes it as follows: "The mansion, or Mission, consists of four rows of houses forming a complete square, where there is all kinds of mechanics at work; the church faces the east and the guardhouse the west, the north and south line comprise the workshops. They have large vineyards, apple and peach orchards, and some orange and fig trees. They manufacture blankets, and sundry other articles; they distill whiskey and grind their own grain, having a water mill of a tolerable quality; they have upward of 1000 persons employed, men, women, and children, Indians of different nations. The situation is very handsome, pretty streams of water running through from all quarters, some thousands of acres of rich and fertile land as level as a die in view, and a part under cultivation, surrounded on the north with a high and lofty mountain handsomely timbered with pine and cedar, and on the south with low mountains covered with grass. Cattle—this mission has upward of 30,000 head of cattle, and horses, sheep, hogs, etc. in proportion. They slaughtered at this place from 2 to 3000 head of cattle at a time; the mission lives on the profits." Life at the mission was enjoyable to the Americans. The only difficulty encountered was the attempt to understand the language. Rogers says, "I could see a great deal of satisfaction here, if I could talk their language, but as it is, I feel great diffidence in being among them, not knowing the topic of their conversation, still every attention is paid to me by all that is present, especially the old priest. I must say he is a very fine man and very much of a gentleman." The friendliness of Father Sanchez was again shown by the fact that he gave Smith 64 yards of shirting to furnish each of the men with goods enough for a new garment. The Indians also led a pleasant life, although they were kept apparently in fear of punishment. Of their recreation, Rogers tells of one Sunday. "The Indians play bandy (hockey) with sticks it being the only game I have seen as yet among them. They play before the priest's door. I am told they dance, both Spaniards and Indians in the course of the evening." The following week a band of two violins, trumpet and triangle, played by the Indians is described as playing "tolerable good music" before the priest's door. While the men were working and enjoying their life at San Gabriel, Jedediah Smith was attending to his

manifold duties. He was aware of the fact that he was trespassing on Mexican soil; hence, he wrote to Governor Echeandia at San Diego, giving reasons for his entrance into California. Echeandia answered, ordering Smith to appear before him. Accordingly Smith left the mission for San Diego, December 8, 1826. Appearing before the Governor, Smith explained that he had been compelled to enter the region because of the loss of his horses and the scarcity of his provisions. Since it was five hundred miles back to the Great Salt Lake from the Mojave Desert, Smith said to the Governor, and less than three hundred miles on to San Gabriel, he had proceeded by the shorter course. The Governor was reluctant to release Smith, but was finally convinced of his honesty when the captains of several American ships (notably Captain W.H. Cunningham of the *Courier*, from Boston) signed a certificate of character for Smith testifying that they believed him innocent, and that he had been compelled to enter California for want of provisions. The captains also stated that they believed him truthful in saying that "his sole object was the hunting and trapping of beaver and other furs." This document was presented by Smith to the Governor December 20, 1826. Echeandia gave Smith permission to leave the country by the same route by which he had entered, but refused to let him go north along the settled coast to the Russian post of Bodega. Jedediah returned by boat to San Pedro as the guest of Captain Cunningham, on the *Courier*. They arrived in San Gabriel Wednesday, January 10, 1827.

A week later things were in readiness to move on, horses had been purchased in Los Angeles, saddles repaired, and equipment packed. From the mission Smith's party followed a northeasterly direction for four miles, camping the first night at the same Indian farmhouse at which they had arrived in November of the preceding year on their way to San Gabriel.

The next day, January 19, 1827, they started on again, traveling until they reached another farmhouse, probably in Live Oak Canyon, north of the present city of Pomona. The wild horses which had recently been added to their string were continually breaking loose and wandering away, causing considerable trouble. It was necessary to remain on the creek a day to recover five of these horses which were missing and to break others. From the canyon the party journeyed not far above our much traveled Foothill Boulevard of today. From a camp near the old San Bernardino, which was west of the present city of Redlands, Smith went to the town to get supplies for which the San Gabriel Father had given him an order. The party then went north through the Cajon Pass, thence following the Sierra Madres, entering the San Joaquin Valley, either by the Tejon Pass or the Tehachapi, late in January, or early February, of 1827.

Smith's orders were to leave by the same route he had taken when he first came into California but, as we have seen, he was not eager to re-cross the desert; neither was he prepared to quit the California region. Traveling up the valley the party kept a northerly course, which has been estimated as about one hundred miles inland.

During the winter months a great deal of trapping was done. Indians met were not hostile. Continuing north, Smith and his men came finally to a river, probably the Stanislaus, although authorities differ on this point. Since Smith named the river the Wimmulche it could not well have been any farther north than the Stanislaus, for the tribe of that name did not extend beyond.

Smith attempted to take his men across the Sierras early in May to the company rendezvous at Bear Lake, but finding the snow too deep and soft, he was forced to return to the valley and make camp. Smith, at this time, made up his mind that he would leave all of his men except two at the camp on the Stanislaus.

With these two men, seven horses and two mules he again undertook to cross St. Joseph (identified by Dale as Mt. Stanislaus) and succeeded in his purpose after eight days of hardship. This was the first known crossing of the Sierra Nevada's by an American. While in the San Joaquin Valley, Father Duran, of the San Jose Mission, accused Smith and his party of enticing the neophytes from the mission. The charge was proved false, but the party was still regarded with suspicion. In his characteristic straightforward manner, Smith wrote to the Father explaining the reason for his presence. This letter is dated May 19, 1827, and a portion of it reads as follows: "I am a long way from home and am anxious to get there as soon as the nature of the case will admit. Our situation is quite unpleasant, being destitute of clothing and most of the necessities of life, wild meat being our principle subsistence. I am, Reverend Father, your strange but real friend and Christian brother." This letter did not satisfy the authorities, only serving to arouse them to greater exertions.

The Governor heard of the complaints made against Smith, and wrote ordering the intrepid American either to leave the territory immediately, or avail himself of one of the following alternatives: to come to San Jose, there to be kept under guard, or to sail on the first vessel that would carry him north of 42 degrees latitude. This letter was not sent until May 23, and was too late, for Smith had left on the twentieth.

From the east side of Mt. Joseph, a twenty-day journey was necessary in order to cross the barren plains before the Great Salt Lake was reached. Hardships from the lack of water, food and clothing, were again undergone. The men were compelled to eat the horses as the animals succumbed; only one horse remained on their arrival. This horse and one mule were so worn and weak that they could hardly carry the small packs. It was about June 17, 1827, that Smith arrived at the Great Salt Lake. He did not tarry in that region but hurried on to the company rendezvous at Bear Lake. There he met his two partners Jackson and Sublette, for whom he had a few furs and much news. A month's rest was taken before starting again for California, to join his men there. Just before leaving on his second trip, Smith wrote a letter to William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, giving a report of his first trip, and this report remains as a valuable source of information.

Illustration – "Arrival of Jedediah Strong Smith at San Gabriel Mission, November 27, 1826, reproduced from a wall painting in Carthay Circle Theatre, Los Angeles, by the courtesy of the theatre management."

Jedediah Strong Smith
the
Pathfinder of the Sierras

Part Second.

July 13, 1827, Jedediah Smith left the rendezvous by way of the Great Salt Lake on his second trip to California, with eighteen men and two Indian women. To avoid crossing the Sierras, Smith took his previous route down to the Mojave Indians on the east bank of the Colorado. He was expecting to again replenish his supplies and to enjoy the hospitality of the Indians. Since the first appearance of the Americans among them, however, the Indians had been warned against the Americans by the Mexicans. The Indians were seemingly peaceful. Smith was ferrying his men across the river. He and a few companions were on the west shore, others were on the river, while the remainder of the party waited on the east bank. The Indians, who were aiding the party to cross, suddenly fell on the entire group and began massacring them. The company was surprised and horrified at this strange turn of events. Ten men were killed, the two women, and all the horses were taken; papers and property were also stolen. This massacre was in August, 1827. Smith and eight men were left afoot with no alternative but to go on. They tramped across the desert with much hardship reaching San Bernardino in nine and a half days. Here they secured a few supplies and left two of their men, Thomas Virgin, who had been wounded by the Mojaves, and Isaac Galbraith, who requested to remain. From San Bernardino Smith went again through Cajon Pass, then northward through the San Joaquin Valley, to join his men.

Smith found his men in their camp on the Stanislaus, November, 1827, almost destitute of food and anxiously awaiting his return. He remained in camp two days then, with Indian guides, went to the San Jose Mission expecting to be treated with hospitality. Instead of being welcomed, Smith was seized and put in prison, a mere hovel, where he was kept three days without provisions. The officers denied him the right of seeing the Governor, but allowed him to write to Echeandia, who was at this time in Monterey. The Governor answered demanding Smith to appear before him under guard. Smith was thereupon sent under the guard of four soldiers, and arrived in Monterey after a three days journey. In the absence of interpreters difficulty was experienced in understanding the Governor, but again captains of American vessels came to Smith's aid. They entreated in his behalf until the decision to throw him into prison was changed, November 15, 1827. Smith was released but ordered off Mexican territory, Captain Cooper becoming responsible for his conduct. From Monterey he joined his men who were then in San Francisco in a deplorable condition. Smith's route was designated, and he was to leave within two months, incurring no unnecessary delay. His men were too well acquainted with Mexican tactics to tarry long; hence, we find them moving slowly up the Sacramento River.

The river could not be crossed at the place designated. After futile attempts to find a pass in the Sierra Nevada's, the party decided, about the middle of April, 1828, to cross the river and go northwest. Their course took them through the present counties of Humboldt and Trinity,

across the Coast Range to the sea. The way was rough, as the Rogers journal indicates. The following entry was made under the date of Wednesday, May 14, 1828: "The travelling amazing bad; we descended one point of brushy and rocky mountain where it took us about six hours to get the horses down, some of them falling about 50 feet perpendicular down a steep place into a creek; one broke his neck, a number of packs left along the trail, as night was fast approaching and we were obliged to leave them and get what horses we could collected at camp; a number more got badly hurt by the falls, but none killed but this one that broke his neck." Game was scarce; fish and berries were purchased from the Indians and served as the chief food of the party.

That the men realized the danger of their life is evidenced by a prayer which Rogers put in his diary May 22. He wrote, "Oh God, may it please Thee, in Thy divine providence to still guide and protect us through this wilderness of doubt and fear, as Thou hast done heretofore; and be with us in the hour of danger and difficulty, as all praise is due to Thee and not to man, oh, do not forsake us Lord, but be with us and direct us through." There was a great deal of trapping along the way. Many valuable furs and about 150 horses were in the possession of Smith and his men when he reached the shore just above the Klamath River. They followed the coast northward quite closely, at times even traveling on the beach sand.

Arriving at the lower part of the Umpqua River, Smith learned from the Indians that the fertile Willamette Valley was near. He rejoiced with his companions that their hardships and suffering would soon be over, as indeed they were for most of his men. The Umpqua Indians were apparently friendly, trading fish and beaver skins. The river was crossed, and the road to the north was discovered to be in a bad condition on account of recent heavy rains. Determined to find a better road, Smith left camp alone on the morning of Monday, July 14, 1828. While he was gone the Indians raided the camp, putting to death all of the men but two. Turner, who was serving as cook that morning, used a fire brand, and half-burned poplar stick, as a weapon to knock down or kill the four Indians who attacked him. The other American who escaped was a man named Arthur Black. Black had just cleaned and loaded his rifle when three Indians leaped on him. He, being a man of powerful strength shook the Indians off, firing into the crowd. He escaped to the woods, while Turner ran the other way, meeting Smith as he was returning from his search for a road. Black was not aware that any other of the men had escaped, and Smith and Turner were ignorant of Black's presence in the same country. The Indians had taken everything from the camp and the only alternative for Smith was to walk on in hopes of finding aid in recovering the confiscated goods at Fort Vancouver. The journey to the fort was just another terrible tramp in the wilderness. Life was sustained only by eating toads, snails, bugs, and fern roots. Keeping in their course north up the Willamette, Smith and Turner arrived at Fort Vancouver in August, 1828. They were surprised to find that Black had arrived just one night preceding. The British factor, Dr. McLoughlin, at Fort Vancouver was friendly and courteous. He was kind enough to send an expedition down to the Indians and recover Smith's stolen property. For his trouble McLoughlin charged for his men's time at the rate of sixty dollars a year, and four dollars for any horses that were lost on the trip. The British Fur Company was

kind enough, also to buy the furs for \$20,000, paid by a draft on London. Not until March 1829 did Smith and Black leave the Fort, going to join the two partners, Jackson and Sublette, on the headwaters of the Snake.

After joining his partners Smith did not return again to California. On August 4, 1830, the partnership of Smith, Jackson and Sublette sold out to younger men. On the same day the three partners left for St. Louis. Jedediah Smith now gave in to the lure of the Santa Fe Trail, leaving St. Louis April 10, 1831, with his former partners, two brothers, Colonel J.J. Warner as clerk and many employees. As veteran mountaineers the party felt themselves capable of going anywhere, but the hot desert journey was different from the mountain regions, and there was no guide in the train competent to direct them. The way to the Arkansas was not difficult, but from that place on to the Cimarron there was no definite road, only a great network of misleading trails. After two days without water Smith, with his usual daring, set out to find a stream. He soon came to the Cimarron River, and forgetting to take the usual precautions Smith allowed his animals to drink, then satisfied his own thirst. Arising from the bank he became aware of the fact that he was surrounded by a band of hostile Comanche Indians. The Indians fired on him and wounded him fatally, but before giving up his life Smith sought his revenge by killing the chief and two others of the band. The pistol which Smith used was sold by the Indians to some Mexican traders, who revealed the story of the American's death to his company. This perfusion cap pistol and the watch carried by Smith are now in the possession of Mr. Walter Bacon of Los Angeles, a grandnephew of the "Pathfinder of the Sierras."

With the death of Jedediah Strong Smith in the spring of 1831, the most remarkable explorer of the far west ended his earthly life to enter into perhaps a more interesting field of adventure. His journeys on earth were of exceeding importance from a geographic standpoint, for he traversed a region which was still very hazy in the minds of Americans. Lewis and Clark had opened a transcontinental route to the Pacific through the north, over the Missouri and the Columbia; Pike had done the same for the southwest, and the Santa Fe Trail linked the Mexican settlements along the upper Rio Grande with Americans in Missouri. It remained for Smith to open up the Great Basin from the Snake River to the Colorado, and from the Rocky Mountains to the Sierras, as well as the inland valleys of the San Joaquin and the Sacramento.

Smith as a fur trader and trapper furnishes one of the best examples of daring and adventure in the west. He was the forerunner of advancing civilization, the pathfinder of the trans-mountain emigration. Without aid or protection from the Government, he pushed into unexplored regions. Most of the early trappers did not concern themselves with the idea that perhaps they were opening up new territory for the westward-flowing tide of Americans. They did not consider themselves as benefactors of the human race. Smith must have had some idea of the importance of his contribution, for he kept a careful journal of his travels and adventures. He also prepared maps of the country intending to publish a book of his travels. His papers and maps were collated, but the entire collection of valuable material was burned shortly after his death. Mr. Bacon of Los Angeles, in an interview stated that he is certain that Smith had turned his papers over to Washington Irving for the great novelist to use in the writing of the book in

question, and that the papers were burned in a fire which destroyed the home of the author on the Hudson. But a mere conflagration could not obliterate the great role which the explorer, trader and trapper played in opening up the Rocky Mountain West, and an overland path to California. Indeed, a finer and more heroic pioneer cannot be found than Jedediah Strong Smith, the "Pathfinder of the Sierras."

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P.S. In memory of Jedediah Strong Smith, the first white man to blaze a trail overland from the east into California, a huge boulder brought from the Cajon Pass, through which he came, has been placed in Cathay Center, Los Angeles, by the Native Sons of the Golden West.

The inscription on the bolder is as follows:

"Dedicated to
Jedediah Strong Smith
First American to discover
a route overland from
the east to California.
Explorer – Fur Trader – Missionary
This boulder was brought from El Cajon
Pass through which the pathfinder came
in 1826. Placed here A.D. 1924 by Ramona
Parlor, 109 Native Sons of the Golden
West, in memory of Ida Heimann Hellman."

**Annual Publication
Historical Society of California
1926**

**Jedediah Strong Smith – Pathfinder
by John C. Parish**

The story of Jedediah Strong Smith does not cover a long span of years. He was only 32 when he met his tragic death at the hands of the Comanches, and into less than a decade are packed all the events of his western career. A hundred years have gone by since he crossed the desert and mountains and reached the Pacific Coast in California. Few at the time knew of his achievement and for nearly a century he seemed but a shadowy figure in the history of the west. The modesty of his disposition, the isolated nature of his travels, the absence of strong backing or governmental support, the loss of his papers by fire, all contributed to the haze surrounding the man and his work.

But recent investigations and the publication of contemporaneous documents have largely dissipated the haze, and revealed a man of unusual personality and attainments. This far-wandering man made himself known—often with startling abruptness—to mission fathers and Mexican officials, to factors and traders of the Hudson's Bay Company, to trappers in the mountains, and to Indians in the four corners of the west. And as the evidence accumulates it becomes clear that the man who thus emerges from the dimness of the twenties was himself a large factor in dispelling the still greater obscurity that hung over the region west of the Rockies.

From the valley of the Great Salt Lake, in the vanguard of American trappers, he ranged north to the Clark's Fork of the Columbia, and south to the Colorado. In 1826, first of all Americans, he made his way across the desert and through Cajon Pass to the Pacific Coast in Southern California; and then, not content to retrace his steps, he moved north into the central valley of California and opened another overland route to the Pacific by crossing the rocky barrier of the Sierra's and finding his way back to Great Salt Lake. In 1827, he pushed out again to the coast and was then the first to close by land travel the gap between the far-flung outposts of Mexico in Southern California and Great Britain on the Columbia River. He brought into live contact the farthest frontiers of three nations.

Jedediah Smith was born at Bainbridge, New York on January 6, 1799.¹ The drift of his family was westward to Ohio, and as a boy Jedediah found employment on one of the Great Lakes freighters. It was probably the lure of the western fur trade that brought him in the course of years to St. Louis. Here, in the early twenties, William Ashley was advertising for "enterprising young men" for the Missouri River trade, and expeditions under Andrew Henry

¹ This is not the date usually given but it rests on the evidence of a family Bible, once the property of Jedediah Smith's father but now belonging to Mrs. C.F. Calhoun of Los Angeles. In it are recorded the births of Jedediah Smith and his brothers and sisters.

and Ashley were setting out for the upper waters of the river.

It is with the Ashley expedition of 1823 that we begin to trace clearly the events in Smith's career. He fought in the disastrous battle in June against the Arikaras, then volunteered to carry word upstream to Andrew Henry. Finding Henry on the Yellowstone, he returned with him to Ashley's camp and was sent from there to St. Louis with the furs Henry had gathered. On August 10, he was back again with Ashley and commanded a company in the Indian battle on that date. These two months of ceaseless activity and wide wandering are typical of the remaining eight years of his life.

The west now claimed him as its own. Seldom thereafter did this serious minded young man with his unrelenting energy and his devout religious faith, leave the mountains and valleys so rich in furs and adventure yet so full of hardship and danger. In the winter following the Arikara fight, he trapped in the Crow country where he was attacked by a grizzly and almost lost his life. 1824 and 1825 found him traversing South Pass and pushing so far north that he met trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company.

His most memorable travels began in 1826. In that year the firm of Smith, Jackson and Sublette took over the business of General Ashley and almost immediately Smith set out on a journey south and west of Great Salt Lake. The land was without trails or trappers. He came upon the Colorado River, followed it for several days and then struck west across the desert. Finally on November 27, 1826, he arrived at the mission of San Gabriel, much to the astonishment of the good Franciscan fathers. Soon he found it necessary to go to San Diego to explain his presence to Governor Echeandia. Americans had invaded California by land. Mariners from the States were already there but the Mexicans found it one thing to receive Americans by the open door of the sea and quite another to have them slip through the mountains in the rear. Echeandia was alarmed though probably he had little idea of the real thing that had happened. He gave Smith instructions to go out of the land by the way he had come. Smith, however, crossed the Tehachapi Range and moved northward, trapping as he went. At length, in May 1827, leaving most of his men in the valley, he succeeded in crossing the Sierra's with two companions and after twenty days in the Great Basin reached Great Salt Lake. Within a month he was on his way west again over his original trail with 19 men to rejoin the party he had left in California. This time disaster dogged his footsteps. At the Colorado River crossing, the Mojave Indians killed half of his party, and when he reached California the Mexican officials were more hostile than ever. Undaunted, he gathered up his companions of the preceding year and continued northward finally coming out on the coast near the mouth of the Klamath River. Following the shore on into Oregon he met his crowning disaster. At the Umpqua River, Indians fell upon his party and Smith and two others were the only survivors.

After weeks of privation they reached Fort Vancouver on the Columbia, where Dr. John McLoughlin, the Hudson's Bay factor, treated them with the utmost kindness and kept them for the winter. Moving up the Columbia in the spring of 1829, Smith at length rejoined his partners, Jackson and Sublette, in the upper Snake Country, and persuaded them to leave the trade beyond the South Pass thereafter to his benefactor and the British traders. His great work as an explorer

was done. Others could now travel the routes he had discovered. He continued his trading east of the mountains until the fall of 1830 when, returning to St. Louis with a wagon train of furs from the Rockies, he and his partners said farewell to the old trade. In 1831, they started on the fateful trip along the Santa Fe Trail, where, in the dry course of the Cimarron River, Smith lost his life to the Comanches. Death had walked beside him for eight years, and time and again had reached out and then withdrawn its hand. But his life had been spared until his great work was done. His own journals were apparently lost; his maps, so much used in his day, have not been found; he lived to write no memoirs. Yet the evidence is abundant to show that, as much as Lewis and Clark before him, and certainly more than any man who followed him, Jedediah Smith deserves the title of Pathfinder.

Fout's Complete Diary

**A Chronicle of the Founding
of San Francisco**

**Translated from the original Spanish
manuscript and edited**

by

Herbert Eugene Bolton

Sather professor of history

Director of the Bancroft Library

University of California

University of California Press

Berkeley, California

1933

"Diary of an expedition to

Monterey by way of the

Colorado River

1775 – 1776

by

Father Fray Pedro Font"

Diary kept by the Father preacher Fray Pedro Font, Apostolic Missionary of the College of Santa Cruz de Queretaro, during the journey which he made to Monterey by order of the most excellent Senor Lieutenant General Baylio Frey Don Antonio Maria Bucareli y Ursua, Viceroy, Governor and Captain General of this New Spain.

59 – Sunday, December 31, 1775

I said Mass. We set out from the foot of the hill at a quarter past nine in the morning, and at a quarter to five in the afternoon we arrived at the banks of the Santa Ana River, having traveled some eight leagues to the west-northwest, with some short turns to the west.¹ Eight leagues.

As soon as we started we left the road of the first expedition to avoid a detour and some bad places, crossing through a range of hills which here close in the valley of San Joseph, and going through a small pass. We traveled about a league over level country and then continued for about three more leagues in a valley which communicates with this one of San Joseph and is very extended and of good land. We soon came to some hills and ascended an easy pass and then descended to a somewhat narrow canyon which gets wider until it comes out into the valley of Santa Ana, being about a league long. Afterward we traveled about three leagues, crossing this valley until we arrived at the banks of the river. In the first and second range of hills and their canyons, which are of moist earth, I saw a great abundance of rosemary and other fragrant plants, and in the second long canyon many sunflowers in bloom, and grapevines and wild grapes of such good stock that it looked like a vineyard; and perhaps with a little cultivation they would yield good grapes. In short, all that country appears to be good and if the small hills which are in these valleys only had some trees there would be nothing more to desire. On the road yesterday and today we found no water, although there is some on one side or the other, but somewhat distant.

Yesterday, right close by the road I saw a very deep round hole full of water, and as it was in the middle of the plain I suspected that perhaps it might be the result of some earthquake by which that piece of earth was swallowed up, the water apparently having been left at the level of the water of the lagoon. Today I found on the road and gathered a few snail shells like those which grow in the woods of Spain, things which do not exist in the interior of this America and are unknown. On all the day's march we had on our right the snow covered Sierra Madre and on the left the long and low sierra which runs along the road to San Diego. This is the one which in the expedition of Commander Portola, who a few years ago entered by land from California to these new discoveries, they called the Sierra del Trabuco. The Santa Ana River² is a stream with plentiful water and a very deep channel, being only some four or five varas wide, or six at the most, in all this vicinity; but it is so deep that it has very few and difficult fords because of the rapidity with which the water runs. For this reason the cattle which arrived at the camp at midnight crossed over to the other side next morning with some difficulty, and one bull was drowned in the ford. Likewise, a horse which entered to drink was overpowered by the water,

¹ Leaving camp at the turn of Mt. Rudolph, Anza swung west, through the site of Lakeview, then over Bernasconi Pass and across Allesandro Valley through March Field, down Sycamore Canyon, then some seven miles to the Santa Ana River. Camp was four or five miles west of Mt. Rubidoux. The valley "which communicates with this one of San Joseph" was Allesandro Valley.

² The stream still has the same name.

and he too was unable to get out and was drowned. The waters of the river are very crystalline and beautiful. It arises in the Sierra Nevada, and runs from northeast to southwest with some variation and declination to the west until it reaches the sea, and most of the way it runs boxed in between hills. Some cottonwoods grow upon its banks but they are the only trees in all these plains, for only in the Sierra Nevada are some pines seen. It may be that there are other trees in their canyons, which, being somewhat distant, are not visible. During all this day we did not see a single Indian.

Monday, January 1, 1776

I said Mass, and in it I said a few words to the people concerning the character of the holiday, exhorting them to renew their good resolutions, since we were now beginning a new year, etc. At daylight the ground was as white as if it had snowed, from the frost which fell early this morning. Because yesterday's journey was long and the cattle had arrived late, it was decided to do no more than to cross the river, for although it is narrow it has a great deal of water, is very rapid, and has very high banks, as I said yesterday. Consequently the ford was repaired after Mass at the cost of considerable labor. About ten o'clock in the morning the courier, who was sent on December 27, arrived with a reply from the mission of San Gabriel, a soldier from there, and seventeen saddle animals sent by the Fathers to relieve those of ours which were badly worn. They also brought the distressing news that the Indians of the post and mission of San Diego rebelled in the month of November, killing a friar and wounding the soldiers. Of this event I shall speak more at length later on, in its proper place.³ The ford being arranged, at two o'clock in the afternoon we began to cross the river; and in an hour it was successfully passed, halt being made on the other side near its banks. Most of the people crossed over on a bridge formed by a large cottonwood which had fallen and lay athwart the river. Near it was another cottonwood which the former expedition used as a bridge. This place is like all the rest, a fertile and beautiful country, with rose bushes, grapevines, blackberry bushes, and other plants which by their verdure are pleasing to the sight. In a word all this country from the Puerto de San Carlos forward is a region which does not produce thorns or cactus. In fact, I did not see in all the district which I traveled as far as the port of San Francisco any spinous trees or shrubs such as there are in the interior, except some prickly pears and some nettles which I saw near the port of San Diego; nor are any thorns encountered on the plants except on the blackberries and rose bushes. Finally, this country is entirely distinct from the rest of America which I have seen; and in the grass and the flowers of the fields, and also in the fact that the rainy season is in winter, it is very similar to Spain.

60 – Tuesday, January 2, 1776

³ The crossing was not far from the Southern Pacific Railroad bridge across the Santa Ana River.

I said Mass. We set out from the Santa Ana River at a quarter past eight in the morning, and at a quarter past two in the afternoon halted at the Arroyo de los Alisos, having traveled six leagues to the west northwest.⁴ Six leagues.

The road is all very level except on leaving the Santa Ana River, where we crossed some long and low hills which, like all the rest on the way, were covered with good pasturage, both dry and green—a country very well-suited for sheep and goats because it is very clean, without anything which might injure the wool. The Sierra's on the sides are those which I have already mentioned, and at the camp we were now nearer to the Sierra Nevada. In the morning, the whole sky was very cloudy and half way on the road a very fine gentle rain began to fall on us; but it was not very troublesome, though it rained harder as soon as we halted, and continued this way until late at night. The Rio de los Alizos is so-called because so many sycamores grow on its banks, which being the only timber and firewood in all these plains. Its waters are crystalline, most beautiful and good. It arises in the Sierra Nevada, and regularly carries very little water, but it is permanent. On its banks I found a very tender and a very good plant somewhat similar to lettuce, although it had a thinner and longer leaf. I gathered a goodly quantity of it and took it to the tent of the commander. We ate it for salad and all liked it very much. There are other pretty plants, rosemary, etc. After leaving the valley of San Joseph, I heard some birds somewhat larger than sparrows, singing along the road. They say they are larks, but they did not look like them to me. Their song is not long but is sweet. From here forward I afterwards saw a great many of these birds in all places.

On the trunk of a large sycamore near which we halted, under an [a symbol was drawn—capital letters IHS with a capital T over the H] which on the last expedition was carved by the commander, I left carved with the point of a knife the record of our coming, with this inscription: In the year 1776 came the San Francisco expedition.

61 – Wednesday, January 3, 1776

We set out from the Arroya de los Alizos at a quarter past nine in the morning, and at three in the afternoon, having traveled some six leagues to the west-northwest, halted on the banks of an arroyo which joins others and forms the San Gabriel River.⁵ Six leagues.

All the road is very level. About a league after leaving camp, we went through a pass or opening formed in the right by the skirts of the Sierra Nevada and on the left by some low hills which turn to the west, and at whose foot there is a lagoon when it rains. The other time they called this pass the Puerto de los Ossos because here they saw a number of bears. Then one enters a country very level in all directions, which we found very green in places, the flowers already bursting into bloom. The earth is very moist, not only because here the rainy season is in the winter as in Spain, but also because of the great fogs which I have noticed falling in the night

⁴ Arroyo de los Alisos was San Antonio Creek, and camp was near Ontario. The low hills crossed on starting were the Jurupa Hills, which were crossed near Pedley.

⁵ Camp was at San Gabriel Wash, north of Vineland. The Puerto de los Ossos and the lake were near San Dimas, between San José Hills and the main San Gabriel range to the north. The route lay past La Verne and San Dimas, with Covina and Vineland lying south of the route.

when it is fair. The rains are fine, gentle, and continuous, and without thunder. In some places live oaks are seen, and apparently in the Sierra there are more of them, together with the pines. Before reaching the campsite we entered an open grove of various kinds of small trees. The river flows from the Sierra Nevada and runs almost west.⁶ Its waters are very crystalline and beautiful, but small in quantity, although it is seen from the width of its bed that when it is in flood it carries a great deal of water. Having learned that the Mission of San Gabriel had been moved to the place where it had its fields, somewhat closer to the Sierra Nevada than formerly,⁷ half-way on the journey we left the old road followed the last time and, opening a new road, directed the march to the new site; but because the saddle animals were tired we did not reach the mission today. This morning there was a heavy fog, and soon it rose in clouds which covered the Sierra Nevada to which the clouds withdrew, leaving us a very clear day. Although we were so close to the Sierra Nevada we did not feel very much cold these nights. Perhaps because the sea is not very far away the temperature is mild, for although it is quite cold it is not so piercing as the weather which we experienced on the Gila and Colorado Rivers.

⁶ Its course is southwest. Where it was crossed the wash is a mile or two wide.

⁷ Between the two Anza expeditions the mission had been moved about a league northwest.

**Development of Travel between Southern Arizona and Los Angeles
as it related to the San Bernardino Valley
by
George William Beattie**

Summary

1. The way from Tucson to Yuma was blazed by Father Kino, about the year 1700.
2. A route from Yuma across the desert and through the mountains to San Gabriel was discovered in 1775, by Captain Anza. This route was abandoned in 1792, but the part leading across the desert was re-traveled many years later.
3. The Carrizo Creek—San Felipe route to Warner's Pass, was discovered by Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Fages in 1782; but so far as we know, the route was not used until the coming of the Santa Fe traders in 1831.
4. In 1832, David E. Jackson of Santa Fe traveled from Warner's Pass to the Santa Ana River by way of Temecula Valley, making use probably of some old Indian trail.
5. Between 1832 and 1851, much travel from Sonora came into California by Warner's Pass, Aguanga and the San Jacinto Valley or, in other words, by the San Bernardino-Sonora Road.
6. In 1853, Lieutenant J.G. Parke's party of government engineers opened a road from the summit of San Gorgonio Pass to the desert; and crossed the desert west of the Salton Sink to the Old Emigrant Road through Carrizo Creek.
7. By 1858, a limited amount of travel had developed over a line paralleling Lieutenant Parke's route. Prospectors continued its use, but heavy travel over this line, now a part of the Ocean to Ocean Highway, came only with the development of the Imperial Valley as a farming region.
8. The opening of Bradshaw Road to the Colorado River placers, in 1862, gave the San Gorgonio Pass an importance that it has never lost.
9. Travel over the Old Emigrant Road by Warner's Pass to the California goldfields was extensive in 1849 and for many years thereafter. For about three years prior to the Civil War, it was traveled by the Butterfield Overland Mail Stages. It also served as a military road during the war, and both the Banning and Tomlinson Companies ran stages over it after the war. With the discontinuance, early in 1868, of the last stage line over Warner's Pass, the Old Emigrant Road sank into disuse.

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First Journal of Harrison G. Rogers

Page 198

... The face of the country changes hourly, handsome bottoms covered with grass similar to ours—blue grass; the mountain goes lower and clear of rock to what they have been heretofore. [Monday, November] 27th – We got ready as early as possible and started a west course and traveled 14 miles and encamped for the day. We passed innumerable herds of cattle, horses and some hundred of sheep. We passed four or five Indian lodges that their Indians act as herdsmen—there came an old Indian to us that speaks good Spanish and took us with him to his mansion (Mission)

**Annual Publication
Historical Society of Southern California
1926**

**Jedediah Strong Smith
“A Group of Jedediah Strong Smith Documents”**

The two letters printed below, written by Jedediah Smith to his brother Ralph within the last two years of his eventful life, give an intimate view of the characteristics of that unusual fur trader and explorer. As far as the writer knows only a few paragraphs have heretofore been printed. The letters were made available for publication through the kindness of Miss Stella Drumm of the Missouri Historical Society from copies in possession of that institution. The originals are deposited at the State Historical Society of Kansas at Topeka. The two excerpts from the Missouri Republican are also from the files of the Missouri Historical Society. A more detailed account of the wagon trip of 1830 is given in the letter from Smith, Jackson and Sublette to the Secretary of War, John H. Eaton, October 29, 1830. It was printed in Senate Executive Documents, 21st Congress, Second Session 1831, Doc. 39, pp. 21-23, and has been reprinted in other publications.

John C. Parish

Wind River, east side of the Rocky Mountains

December 24, 1829

Dear Brother,

It is some length of time since I wrote you, but I think you will excuse me when I tell you I have never received a letter from you since I left home, notwithstanding my repeated requests in my letters for an answer—I cannot think you have not wrote—miscarried.

I have often written, but my memorandums are not at hand and I do not recollect the substance of what I wrote, further than I have always been anxious to know of the welfare of my friends and I do assure you that anxiety still remains.

I feel thankful for this privilege we enjoy of writing to and inquiring of each other's welfare both spiritual and temporal. Should you receive this, please give me (and as soon as possible as my partner will be in St. Louis a short time, and then return to join me and my other partner in the mountains) an explanation of your silence—and a full account of the situations of our friends. Since I left home I have passed through various vicissitudes of fortune; I have been fortunate in some respects—in others, unfortunate. I have passed through the country from St. Louis, Missouri, to the North Pacific Ocean, in different ways—through countries of barrenness and seldom one of the reverse. Many hostile tribes of Indians inhabit this space and we are under the necessity of keeping a constant watch; notwithstanding our vigilance we sometimes suffer. In August 1827, ten men who were in company with me lost their lives by the

Amuchabas Indians on the Colorado River. And in July 1828, fifteen men who were in company with me lost their lives by the Umpqua Indians on the river of the same name—it enters the North Pacific one hundred miles south of the mouth of the Columbia. Many others have lost their lives in different parts of the country. My brother, believe me, we have many dangers to face and many difficulties to encounter but, if I am spared, I am not anxious with regards to difficulties—for particulars you must wait a meeting. When you write, do not omit letting me know how Dr. Simons is, David and Titus Lique—remember me to my friends, the Dr. and his sons. I wish as many of them as may find it convenient, to write and that soon, for the reason before mentioned, I shall write a few lines to Peter and Austin and as Austin writes they are at the tin and coppersmith trade I shall advise them to make themselves masters of that valuable trade. I shall likewise write to my other friends, so many as I have time to write to—I shall only state the substance of what I have written above and, my brother, will undoubtedly do me the favor to forward them. As it respects my spiritual welfare, I hardly durst speak. I find myself one of the most ungrateful, unthankful creatures imaginable. Oh, when shall I be under the care of a Christian church! I have need of your prayers. I wish our society to bear me up before the Throne of Grace. I cannot speak to my friends with regards to my coming home. I have set so many times and always found myself unable to perform, that it is better to omit it. Give my love to my father, mother, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, none excepted.

I remain as ever your affectionate brother,

Jedediah S. Smith

P.S. I concluded after writing the above, that if Mr. R. Campbell now resides in St. Louis he should be the agent instead of Gen. Ashley, if he is not there it will be as above written. J.S.S.

Mr. Ralph Smith

P.O. Richland County

Aside

P.S. Please turn over and read a few lines. Providence has made me a steward of a small pittance; and my prayer is that while I am allowed the privilege of using it, I may use it without abuse. I will endeavor to forward a little money, as you will see below, and no doubt, my brother, will assist me in disposing of it according to my wish, and it must be your particular care that none who may receive a benefit know from where it comes. In one of the rest of my letters will I speak of my temporal concerns—in the first place my brother, our parents must receive of our beneficence, and if Dr. Simons is in want, I wish him to be helped. I want, if it is in your power, that you should place Ira B. Paddock and Nelson in a good English school—I will pay no attention to Austin or Peter, further than to advise them to make themselves masters of their trade, as they are now men. I wish you to consult Dr. Simons on the method of educating our brothers, as it is my wish to carry them into some of the higher branches of education. I feel in hopes I shall be able, when it is needed, to send more money. You will consult the Dr. if alive; if not, some other guide and write to me your own ideas, as well as the conclusion of the Dr. on the

subject. I write to Gen. Wm. H. Ashley, of St. Louis, to take charge of the money, and get an interchange of letters with you and then take the proper method to forward it securely. My partner Mr. Wm. L. Sublette takes this letter to St. Louis and forwards it, and if any accident has befallen Gen. Ashley, he will appoint another agent and let you know by letter. As I before stated, Mr. Sublette will remain in St. Louis about two months before he returns to join Mr. Jackson and myself in the mountains. The sum for which you will expect to receive will be two thousand and two hundred dollars. You will do me the favor to keep an act of the expenditures. If any of our friends are in a distressed situation you will please let me know. Recollect that we are brothers, and I shall not forgive you if you do not let me know your own situation—be not too modest. It is that I may be able to help those who stand in need, that I face every danger. It is for this that I traverse the mountains covered with eternal snow, it is for this that I pass over the sandy plains, in heat of summer, thirsting for water, and am well pleased if I can find a shade, instead of water, where I may cool my overheated body. It is for this that I go for days without eating, and am pretty well satisfied if I can gather a few roots, a few snails, or better, satisfied if we can afford ourselves a piece of horse flesh, or a fine roasted dog, and most of all, it is for this, that I deprive myself of the privilege of society and the satisfaction of the converse of my friends! But I shall count all this pleasure if I am at last allowed, by the All-wise Ruler, the privilege of joining my friends—oh my brother, let us render to Him, to Whom all things belong, a proper proportion of what is His due.

I must tell you for the past, that I am much behind hand. Oh! The perverseness of my wicked heart! I entangle myself altogether too much in the things of time—I must depend entirely upon the mercy of that being, who is abundant in goodness and will not cast off any who call sincerely upon Him! Again I say, pray for me, my brother, and may He, before whom not a sparrow falls without notice, bring us, in His own good time, together again. As I said before let no man know of this little money which is to be forwarded, except the one whom you consult. Let it be the greatest pleasure that we can enjoy, the height of our ambition, now, when our parents are in the decline of life, to smooth the pillow of their age, and as much as in us lies, take from them all cause of trouble. But all this advice is quite unnecessary to one whom I know to be much more ready than myself to do that which is a part of our duty.

As I do not know where our friends may now reside, you will please fill out the superscription.

Your brother,
Jedediah S. Smith

Blue River, fork of Kansas, 30 miles from the Pawnee Village
September 10, 1830

Dear Brother,

Yours of March 15th to April 3rd were duly received, by which I received the mortifying intelligence of the death of our much loved mother. I had indulged the pleasing hope of again seeing and, perhaps, administering to the necessities of her to whom we owe so much! But He who had undoubted right, has called and she is gone.

We can see her no more here; therefore, let us prepare against the same summons must be received by us. I am indebted to Doctor Simons for his epistle dated March 15, 1830 and I wish you to express my gratitude in becoming terms of respect. I fear that Dr. Simons thinks I only feel bound where I sign my name, but, if so, he to whom I am under so many obligations is much mistaken—how happy I should consider myself if I could again be allowed the privilege of spending some time with my much esteemed friend. I think the Dr. recollects this excellent precept, “if you have one friend, feel or think yourself happy.” I hope I have one friend—on my arrival at the settlements. Should I be so fortunate as to gain that point, I intend writing to Dr. Simons.

You recollect my brother, that you, in your favor of 3rd April, said you would be glad to see me in St. Louis if I could not come to Wayne. You will confer a favor upon J.S.S. to come, on receipt of this, as soon as circumstances will permit. Should you not be able to come in time apply to Tracy & Wahrendorf. We shall (if permitted by Him who rules) be in St. Louis in thirty-five or forty days and I shall (if permitted by the same Good Being) remain there one month, perhaps more. Our business is so arranged that I am not under the necessity of visiting the mountains again. Brother, I now recollect that when I came from home I owed \$10 to Ransom Clark, if it is not settled, pray settle it at once for that man will think I am not inclined to pay my honest debts. You have undoubtedly paid the Dr. the few dollars that he will receive. No more at present.

Jedediah S. Smith

P.S. Having overtaken this letter, this 22nd of September at Kansas Ferry, 30 miles from camp Leavenworth, or rather Cantonment Leavenworth, I add we are therefore safe. J.S.S.

Western Enterprise –

An expedition has been for some time past, fitting out in this city, which furnishes a very favorable illustration of the enterprise of the Western people. The expedition is under the immediate control of Messers. Smith, Jackson and Sublette, and is destined for the Rocky Mountains. Seventy men are engaged in the service, and ten heavy wagons are employed in the transportation of the merchandize and baggage of the company. It is the present design to proceed the whole of the distance with the wagons—a means of transportation never before used in expeditions to that country. The principal men concerned in the enterprise are sanguine of the

success of the experiment and in the event of an attack from the savages in the open plain; the wagons may be formed into a breastwork against which all their assaults will be unavailing. We wish the gentlemen every success in their adventure.

Missouri Republican, April 13, 1830

A Trading Expedition, commanded by Messers. Smith, Jackson and Sublette (successors to General Ashley) consisting of 81 men, with ten loaded wagons, each drawn by five mules, left St. Louis for the Rocky Mountains, on the 10th of April, last, and arrived at their place of destination—within 50 miles of the waters of the Pacific⁸ on the 16th of July.

Returning, they left the place of rendezvous on the 4th of August and arrived at St. Louis on the 11th of October, with the same wagons and teams and all in good order. We have not been furnished with any further particulars of the expedition, but understand that they have been successful.

Missouri Republican, October 19, 1830

⁸ This expression evidently means “waters flowing into the Pacific.” In this report to the Secretary of War, John H. Eaton, the leaders themselves, Smith, Jackson & Sublette, clearly state that they did not attempt to take the wagons further than the rendezvous at the heart of the Wind River. See Senate Executive Documents, 21st Congress, Second Session, 1831, Doc. 39.

**Some Notes on the Ancestry of
Jedediah Strong Smith
by
George William Beattie**

While going through the papers of his late wife, a nephew of the famous pathfinder Jedediah Strong Smith, Mr. Walter R. Bacon of Los Angeles has recently located two valuable documents relating to Smith's genealogy. The documents follow:

1. Copy of letter from Miss Ann Cornwall to Mrs. Eliza Spearman, a grandniece of Cyrus Strong, Senior.

Bing Lampton (N.Y.) August 23, 1880

Dear Mrs. Spearman:

Mrs. Clapp has handed me your letter of August 7th. In compliance with your request, will give you what information the family possesses concerning their ancestors.

Elder John Strong, of Northampton, married Abigail Ford.

Their son, Jedediah was born May 7, 1637. He married Freeman Woodward November 18, 1862.

Their son Jedediah Strong, Jr. was born August 7, 1667; married Abigail Ingersoll November 8, 1688; moved from Northampton to Lebanon, Conn., August 24, 1696.

Ezra, son of Jedediah, Jr., was born March 2, 1702. Married Abigail Caverly January 12, 1730.

Jabin, son of Ezra, born August 12, 1734. Married Betsy Curtis, year unknown (about 1762 or 1763). His wife died in 1782; married a widow, Mrs. Grover, who had a son, Jabin; he died without children. Jabin Strong Sr., died about 1817.

Children of Jabin:

1. Sally, who married Jedediah Smith.
2. Abigail(?), who married Jedediah Higgins.
3. Lydia, who married Jedediah(?) Johnstone(?).
4. Betsy who married Jabin (?) Bush.
5. Cyrus (Sr.) who was born February 8, 1777.
6. David who went to sea in the ship *Smyrna* when he was 21 years of age, and was never heard from afterwards.
7. Jabin, Jr., son of the second wife, who died without issue.

Your ancestors were of English descent. Cyrus Strong (Sr.) was married to Rosalinda Brooks in Bainbridge, Sept. 16, 1804. He probably lived there for three or four years. I do not think the family knows anything more about those early days. He lived with your grandfather a part of the time.

Yours Sincerely,
Ann E. Cornwall

(Note: Interrogation points indicate questions raised by Mrs. Spearman's memorandum.)

Memorandum in Handwriting of Mrs. Spearman

Hugh Johnston married Lydia Strong. Moses Bush married Betsy Strong. These two women were all the sisters my Grandmother Smith had. Cyrus Strong, the only brother, married Linda Brooks; their home was in Connecticut. Judge Ford was my Great Grandmother's brother. My Grandmother lived with them until she married J. Smith.

(signed) *Sara Eliza Spearman*

To these documents Mr. Bacon adds the following note:

Mrs. Spearman, who furnished this to Mrs. Bacon in her lifetime, has been dead some years. Her mother was Eunice Smith, a daughter of Sallie Strong, the wife of Jedediah Smith, which later was the father of Jedediah Strong Smith, our first overland Californian. Mrs. Spearman's uncle, Cyrus Strong, was the son of Cyrus Strong, the fifth child of Jabin Strong, mentioned in the enclosed, and she for years kept in touch with him, and had his picture. He was quite a wealthy man, and occasionally came west to see her, so that she kept track of the family.

The enclosed copy of letter giving the family history was written by Ann Cornwall, who for years lived in the family of this uncle, Cyrus Strong, and was an old lady at the time the letter was written.

The authors of the above quoted documents were intimately associated with the near relatives of Jedediah Strong Smith, so their statements showing his place in the Strong family, so widely distributed in America, are especially valuable, in the absence of official records. Time, however, would be required to verify details of the traditions they give by examining entries in family Bibles, or birth, baptismal, marriage and death entries in town, church or court records.

The genealogical line given in these documents, from Elder John Strong to Sally Strong, is in accord with that given in the *History of the Descendants of Elder John Strong of Northampton, Mass.*, by Benjamin W. Dwight, 1871; Joel Munsell, Pub.

Descendants of Sally Strong are not in this book. On page 892 of this work is given the following about Jabin Strong (son of Ezra and Abigail Strong of Hebron, Ct.) born August 12, 1734; married Betsy Curtis, a farmer in Easthampton, Ct. She died in 1782 and he married for 2nd wife, a widow, Mrs. Grover. He traveled largely through the west when it was a wilderness

filled with Indians, and went accidentally over Niagara Falls without being killed. He died about 1816, aged 80 and more.

(6th Gen.) Children by first wife

1. Sallie Strong, married Ozias Brainerd (?)
2. Abigail Strong
3. Lydia Strong
4. Betsy Strong
5. Cyrus Strong, born in Eastampton, Ct., Feb. 8, 1777
6. David Strong went to sea when 21 years of age in the *Smyrna*, built at Chatham, Ct. (Capt. Hall) and was never heard from afterwards.

By second wife

1. Jabin Strong Jr., died without issue.

From the above it might be inferred that Sallie Strong first married Ozias Brainerd, and that Jedediah Smith was her second husband, but the memorandum by Mrs. Spearman makes it probable that entering of the name Ozias Brainerd in this place was an error.

The history of the Strong family contains the following letter to the nineteen-year-old son of Jedediah Strong Jr., Great, Great Grandfather of Jedediah Strong Smith. The writer of this letter was killed by Indians at Wood Creek, N.Y. in October, 1709. The letter helps to explain the strongly religious character of Jedediah Strong Smith—something unusual among the Rocky Mountain men of his day. He was born of a line of deeply religious men.

Letter from Jedediah Strong, Jr.

Son Stephen:

Hearty love to you, hoping you are well; as I am, blessed by God for it. I have nothing of news to write to you. I wrote a letter to your mother yesterday, and therein all the news I have; but yet I gladly take the opportunity to write a word to you, as a testification of my love to you. I hope you will be mindful of the advice I left you. Be tender of, and obedient to your mother. I hope you take care of affairs at home; but they are little in my thoughts, but I daily mind you, and God forbid that I should cease to pray for you daily. I want such opportunity for it as I had at home. Dear son, pray for yourself and for me, also. Give my respects to your mother. What I here say to you, I herein say to the rest of the dear ones. Also, my affectionate love to my dear daughter.

I remain your affectionate father.

Jedediah Strong

July 19, 1709

Submitted by Mrs. Harry E. Walker and accepted.

LA CIENEGA – MUD SPRINGS
LOS ANGELES – SAN BERNARDINO – SONORA ROAD
STAGE STATION AND CAMP GROUNDS
A PLACE FAVORED BY THE INDIANS

NEAR HERE IN
1774 AND 1776

JUAN BAUTISTA De ANZA

TRAIL BLAZER – COLONIZER
AND HIS FOLLOWERS PASSED ON THEIR WAY FROM
SONORA, MEXICO TO MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

AND ON
NOVEMBER 26, 1826

JEDEDIAH STRONG SMITH

TRADER – TRAPPER – PATH FINDER
ONE OF THE MOST HEROIC PIONEERS OF THE NATION
AND

THE FIRST AMERICAN

TO MAKE HIS WAY OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA
CAMPED WITH HIS FEARLESS BAND OF TRAPPERS
NEAR THIS SPOT
ON HIS WAY TO MISSION SAN GABRIEL

ERECTED BY

THE POMONA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND
THE SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OF SAN DIMAS

DEDICATED - 1939

Data on Historical Marker at Mud Springs

Size of plate: 21 x 30 inches

Ordered December 16, 1938 of Wiley T. Rabun
2111 Belgrave Avenue
Huntington Park, California

Price \$45.00 for plate

Granite block – placing of plate on stone and setting it up after cement base was prepared
\$65.00. Mr. Jones gave us a price of \$51.00 donating the difference to the Historical Society.

Stone purchased of the Ponomo Granite Co.
217 North Towne Avenue
Pomona, California
Telephone 1505

[Note: Original Pomona Granite Co. receipt in file.]

The San Dimas Water Co. donated the site, and placed a concrete border around the marker after it was in place.

The San Dimas Chamber of Commerce gave \$25.00

The San Dimas Service Club gave \$25.00

The Wednesday Afternoon Club of San Dimas \$25.00

The Pomona Valley Historical Society \$25.00

Note:

The Road Department leveled and surfaced space between road and marker.

State Motor Patrol kept street closed.

Gilmore Oil Co. furnished loud speaker.

San Dimas Press – publicity and advertising.

Boy Scouts directed traffic.

Stanley Plummer furnished lumber and built speaker stands.

Elwin Sanders – put in foundation for marker donating his services.

Mr. Emplayo and helpers cleared the grounds.

Cy Wright advertised on his store windows.

Ollas Way and Roy Huston gave \$1.00 each.

T. Roe Hobbs – had boxes delivered for seats.

Dedicated – Saturday, March 25, 1939

Mrs. Harry E. Walker

Submitted by Mrs. Miriam Post

LOS ANGELES – SAN BERNARDINO – SONORA ROAD

LA CIENEGA – MUD SPRINGS

STAGE STATION AND CAMP GROUND

IN PRIMITIVE TIMES THIS LOCALITY WAS A FAVORED
PLACE WITH THE INDIANS

NEAR THIS SPOT IN 1774 AND 1776

JUAN BAUTISTA De ANZA

INTREPID TRAILBLAZER – COLONIZER
AND HIS FOLLOWERS STOPPED – THEN PASSED ALONG
THEIR WEARY WAY FROM SONORA MEX TO MONTEREY
AND
NEARBY ON NOVEMBER 26, 1826

JEDEDIAH STRONG SMITH

TRADER-TRAPPER-PATHFINDER – EMPIRE BUILDER
AND HIS FEARLESS BAND CAMPED – THEN RESUMED
THEIR JOURNEY TO MISSION SAN GABRIEL

THE FIRST AMERICAN

TO MAKE HIS WAY OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA

ERECTED BY

THE POMONA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND
THE SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OF SAN DIMAS

DEDICATED _____

Submitted by Roy Fryer

SAN BERNARDINO – SONORA ROAD
MUD SPRINGS
STAGE STATION AND CAMP GROUND

IN 1774 JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA AND
HIS FOLLOWERS, BREAKING A TRAIL
FROM SONORA TO MONTEREY

AND

IN 1826 JEDEDIAH STRONG SMITH
AND A BAND OF TRAPPERS THE
FIRST AMERICANS TO COME
OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA
PASSED THIS SPOT.

ERECTED BY THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
POMONA VALLEY AND THE SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS
OF SAN DIMAS

DEDICATED _____

Submitted by Mrs. H.E. Walker (version 2)

LA CIENEGA – MUD SPRINGS
LOS ANGELES – SAN BERNARDINO – SONORA ROAD
STAGE STATION AND CAMP GROUNDS
A PLACE FAVORED BY THE INDIANS

NEAR THIS SPOT IN
1774 AND 1776

JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA

TRAIL BLAZER – COLONIZER
AND HIS FOLLOWERS PASSED ON THEIR WAY FROM
SONORA MEXICO TO MONTEREY CALIFORNIA

NEAR HERE ALSO

JEDEDIAH STRONG SMITH

TRADER – TRAPPER – PATH FINDER – EMPIRE BUILDER
ONE OF THE MOST HEROIC PIONEERS OF THE NATION
AND

THE FIRST AMERICAN

TO MAKE HIS WAY OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA
CAMPED WITH HIS FEARLESS BAND OF TRAPPERS
NOVEMBER 1826

ERECTED BY

THE POMONA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND
THE SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OF SAN DIMAS

DEDICATED _____ 1938

California's Stately Hall of Fame

Juan Bautista de Anza

By Rockwell D. Hunt

[This is the ninth of a weekly series of biographical sketches of the great figures of California history, written by an authority on the subject. As a whole, the series will constitute a new kind of history of the State and one well worthy of preservation. Students and others interested in the subject will do well to clip the articles as they appear, which will be on this page each Sunday.—Ed. *Times*.]

After the Spanish entrance into Alta California in 1769, and the founding of the first missions and presidios at San Diego and Monterey, it was seen that a direct land route from New Spain (Mexico) would be quite essential if the new land of promise was to be developed into a strong colony. The water route from San Blas was extremely hazardous and very expensive. A practical overland route from Sonora, it was urged, would enable Spain to hold the country indefinitely, for not only could soldiers and colonists then be brought to the north, but needed food supplies and manufactured articles could be transported far more readily. It remained for Juan Bautista de Anza, a young Spanish captain of a small presidio, to render this distinguished service, and by so doing to win high rank among the leading men of the Spanish period of California history.

This young captain was born in 1735, at Fronteras, on the northern border of New Spain, the son of the senior Juan Bautista de Anza, himself an experienced soldier well versed in Indian lore. In 1755, the young man was made a lieutenant, and five years later he was promoted to the captaincy of the presidio of Tubac, though this appointment seems never to have been officially confirmed. He had been an Indian fighter from boyhood.

After long and careful study Anza petitioned Viceroy Bucareli of New Spain for permission to explore an overland route from Sonora to Monterey. The Viceroy gave long and earnest consideration to the proposal, which was enthusiastically indorsed by Father Serra, who quickly perceived that the plan might facilitate the mission enterprise. On Sept. 9, 1773, a resolution was passed by the junta authorizing an expedition under Anza's leadership. It was agreed that Francisco Garcés, a Franciscan monk of valuable experience and a trusted friend of the Indians, should accompany Anza. Garcés was a leader of high achievement who possessed much information regarding the proposed route. He has been called "one of the most remarkable of the missionary explorers of the southwest." Chief credit for authorizing the remarkable expedition however, goes to Antonio Maria Bucareli, one of the greatest of all the viceroys of New Spain.

At the end of three short months Anza was ready to start upon his historic overland expedition—and we may be sure that the task of enlisting his soldiers and colonists and of assembling his livestock and equipment was decidedly formidable. On the eve of his departure a band of Apache Indians raided his camp and made away with more than 100 of his horses and cattle, which brought irksome delay. Nothing daunted, Anza set out on his northward march with 32 persons, including 20 soldiers, 40 horses and 65 cattle, on the eighth of January, 1774.

The cattle were to be used chiefly for food. The thrilling details of that memorable expedition, which cannot be recounted here, are now accessible to every student of California history.

That diligent and faithful historian, Herbert E. Bolton, has traced the route taken with great particularity. It took about a month to reach the Gila River, traveling by way of Sonoita and through Papagueria. Friendly Indians helped Anza's cavalcade across the turbulent Colorado. With no maps and no well-beaten trails they made their way through San Geronimo Pass. At the summit of the pass a large bronze tablet has recently been placed by the Native Sons of the Golden West, on which this inscription appears:

On March 16, 1774, Juan Bautista de Anza, Indian fighter, explorer, and colonizer, led through this pass (named by him San Carlos) the first white explorers to cross the mountains into California. The party traveled from Tubac, Ariz., to Monterey, Cal. On December 27, 1775, on a second expedition into California, de Anza led through this pass the party of Spaniards from Sonora who became the founders of San Francisco.

They crossed the Santa Ana River by means of an improvised bridge, and arrived at Mission San Gabriel on the 22nd of March.

It is impossible now even to imagine all the difficulties encountered and the obstacles that had to be overcome. There were miles upon miles of unknown desert waste, with the piercing rays of the midday sun and the cold and cheerless nights; the supply of drinking water was scant at best and often totally lacking, while foraging for the horses and cattle was always a problem; at times the Apaches were murderously cruel; blinding sandstorms and great stretches of cruel cactus impeded their progress; and always there was suffering and destitution. But Anza was no faint-hearted leader "to be scared by the hoot of an owl, the howl of a coyote or the war-whoop of an Indian."

The task of proceeding from San Gabriel to Monterey was comparatively simple for they were now in a fertile land and the feet of the faithful missionary friars had already marked the course of El Camino Real. At Monterey, Anza was accorded enthusiastic welcome by Governor Fages and Father Palou. And no wonder! His faith was vindicated; he had actually led his party overland to the North Pacific shores and by so doing had made himself the forerunner of Jedediah Smith, John C. Fremont and the hosts of pioneers who joined the great westward trek.

Cutting his stay at Monterey to a mere four days, Anza hastened to return to Tubac where he arrived May 26; thence, proceeding to Mexico City to make his personal report to the Viceroy. Advanced to the rank of lieutenant colonel of cavalry, singly honored on all sides, he began preparations for the second expedition.

At last everything was ready. The start on the second expedition was made from Tubac Oct. 23, 1775. What a strange company that was, numbering all told 240 persons, riding and leading and driving 340 horses, 165 mules and 320 head of cattle! And what a classic example of enterprising pioneering! History records few parallels to the march of Anza in the autumn of 1775.

San Gabriel was reached on the 4th of January; but not until March 10 did the train arrive at Monterey. There Junipero Serra, father-president of the missions, warmly congratulated the intrepid commandant, at the head of his body of colonists. But the expedition had been planned almost exclusively for the purpose of establishing an outpost presidio at San Francisco, together with one or two missions in that vicinity. Therefore Anza pressed on, in spite of sickness and exhaustion, over the route of Portola and Palou to San Francisco Bay. On a hilltop overlooking the Pacific Ocean he caused a cross to be erected, at the foot of which he deposited a document recording the memorable event. An extensive survey of the vicinity was made and sites were selected for a presidio and a mission. Anza was quick to perceive the remarkable features of the bay, of which Father Fort said it "may be called the port of ports." To others remained the distinction of actually founding the presidio of San Francisco and the Mission San Francisco de Asis, commonly known as Mission Dolores.

Anza's great work was done. When at Monterey he mounted his horse on the 14th of April, 1776, to leave the second time for Tubac, the people crowded around their revered leader, many with tears in their eyes, for a final farewell. At the head of a small band he hastened southward, stopping once more at San Gabriel, and after numerous delays—not free from controversy and disappointment, he reached the land of his birth and proceeded to Mexico City to report to Bucareli.

With Anza's later activities we cannot here be greatly concerned. Apparently, through no fault of his own, he incurred the disfavor of Teodoro de Croix, commandant-general, who made the heroic explorer a scapegoat for his own shortcomings, pronouncing unjust and ungrateful maledictions upon the one whose extravagant praises he has previously sung. Anza was urged for the Governorship of Texas, but he failed to receive the appointment. He served as Governor of New Mexico, however, acquitting himself with distinct credit. When his successor arrived in 1788, Juan Bautista de Anza, whose illustrious name is emblazoned high on the scroll of California's great, disappeared from view.

The undeserved obscurity, however, cannot dim the luster of his achievement nor the intrepidity of his unblemished character. If achievements are measured in terms of their results, wrote Prof. Charles E. Chapman, then out of the discovery of Anza and his men "flowed consequences which decided the course of Alta California history." He was indeed "one of the most remarkable men who ever appeared on the field of California history." "As an explorer," declared Bancroft, "he easily deserves to rank above many who hitherto have been awarded more conspicuous places in history. Neither de Soto, La Salle, Pike, Long nor Fremont encountered greater difficulties than he, nor did any of them attack them with so much wisdom and courage."

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“California’s Debt to Jedediah Strong Smith” by Phil Townsend Hanna. *Touring Topics* – 1926

“Jedediah Strong Smith, Pathfinder” by John C. Parish. *Historical Society Publication S.C.* 1926

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Notes from the Diary of Father Fray Pedro Font, 1775 – 1776

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