

**Jedediah Smith Society**  
**April 2-5, 2023 Rendezvous**  
**The People, Foods, and Landscapes of 1828**



**April 5 Guidebook (4): Fort Vancouver**  
**December 26, 1828 - October 30, 1830**

**Fort Vancouver, London, St. Louis, and Washington DC**  
**by George Simpson & Jedediah Smith**



## The 2023 Jedediah Smith Society Rendezvous

From 1822 to 1830, Jedediah Smith led small fur trade brigades from Missouri to much of the Far West, including two expeditions to California, the second penetrating Oregon. Dale Morgan, author of the epic biography *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, says Jed's travels were second in importance to only the Lewis and Clark expedition. Jed was not only a trapper but also the leading Far West map maker of his time. His observations of people, botany, foods, and geography are chronicled in his journals, excerpts of which appear in the four guidebooks prepared for you by Bob Zybach, assisted by Joe Molter.

The society's four-day Rendezvous covers only a small part of Jed's second western odyssey. It starts near the confluence of the Trinity and Klamath Rivers in California where Jed made contact with the Hoopa peoples and ends at Fort Vancouver near today's Oregon-Washington border. You will observe many places where Jed's party camped with over three hundred horses and mules, read recovered journals, and study the latest maps. You will come to understand just how slowly Jed's men had to move over rough terrain through the homelands of native tribes—some friendly, some hostile. Driving a large herd inland to find pasture and fresh water, and navigating the rugged Oregon coast, were especially challenging.

You will also visit the site near the confluence of the Smith and Umpqua Rivers where fourteen of Smith's men were surprised and killed by Kelawatsets while in camp, preparing to continue their journey to Fort Vancouver. You may be surprised to learn that early accounts of the attack may not tell the whole story.

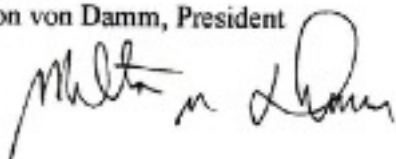
The story of the Umpqua attack has been retold many times. Historians generally agree that it is one of the three significant clashes between mountain men and natives in the 1820s. In July 2000 society members James Auld and Wayne Knauf led a rendezvous to the Umpqua site that included a memorial ceremony at the campsite near the confluence of the Smith and Umpqua Rivers where Jed's men were buried.

Our Rendezvous also documents the escape route of Jed and three survivors to Fort Vancouver and fort superintendent John McLaughlin's subsequent aid in helping Jed to recover some of the supplies, furs, horses, and mules stolen from the camp. Guidebooks 2 and 3 include the journal of Hudson's Bay Company brigade leader Alexander McLeod, who tells about the return to the Umpqua River area. Another Hudson's Bay Company brigade captain who helped was Michael Laframboise, husband of Emily Picard, Wayne Knauf's great-great-grandmother.

The Jedediah Smith Society greatly appreciates the promotional assistance of the Oregon-California Trails Association, and we are pleased that Jedediah Smith has been nominated to their national Hall of Fame. James Auld wrote a very interesting article titled "Jedediah Smith's Disaster at Defeat River," published in the 2014 *Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal*, available from the Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming. That museum will also be hosting the 2024 National Fur Trade Symposium, "The Eve of the Rendezvous," September 12-15, featuring the Jedediah Smith brigade that included James Clyman, Tom Fitzpatrick, William Sublette and others, through South Pass to the Green River.

Welcome!

Milton von Damm, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Milton von Damm', written over the printed name.



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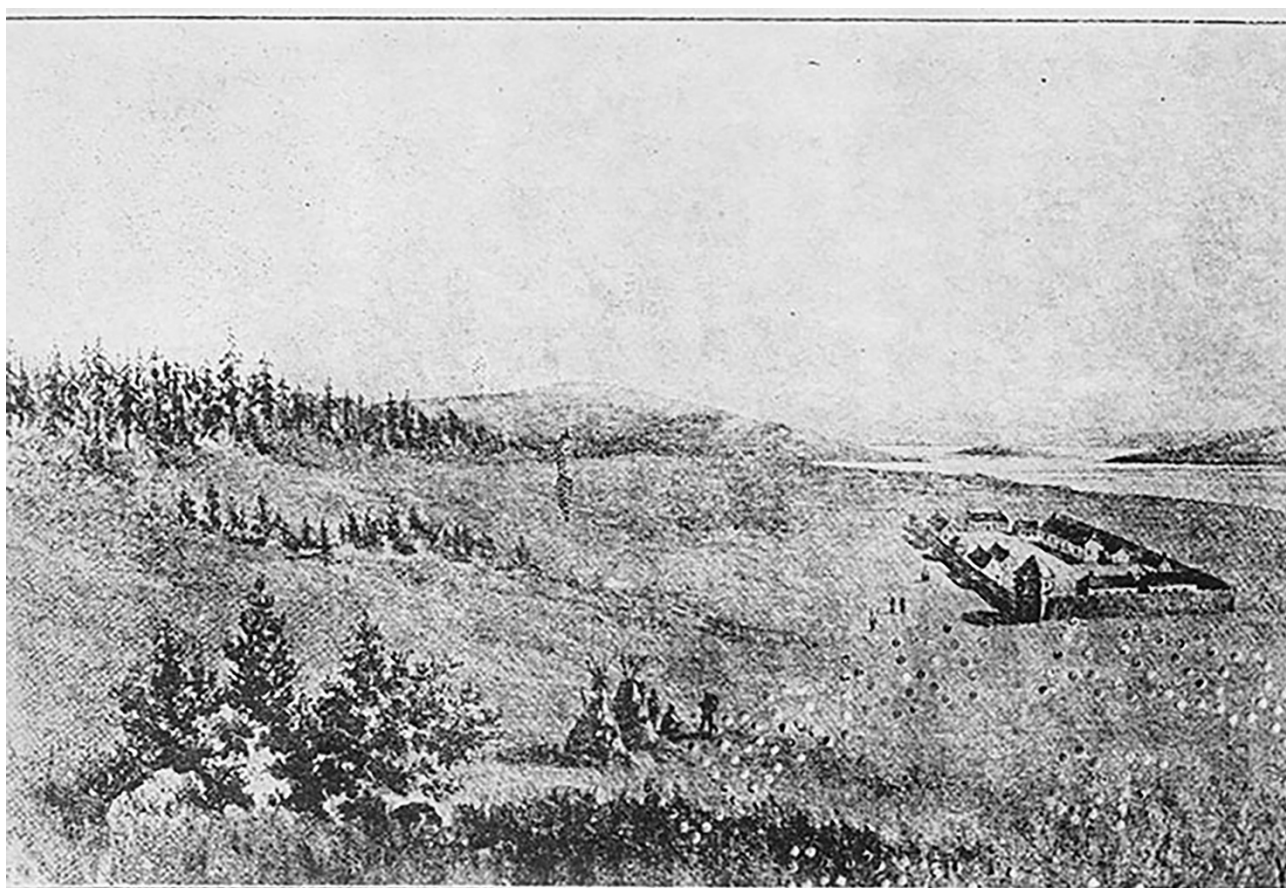
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**Jedediah Smith Society 2023 Rendezvous**  
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**Fort Vancouver, 1833. "Copied by H. H. Ritter -- April 1938," Signal Corps, War Department photograph.**

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*Few men have been more fortunate than I have. I started into the mountains, with the determination of becoming a first-rate hunter, of making myself thoroughly acquainted with the character and habits of the Indians, of tracing out the sources of the Columbia River and following it to its mouth; and of making the whole profitable to me, and I have perfectly succeeded. Jedediah S. Smith, March 1831*

**Simpson December 26, 1828 Letter to Smith**

Mr. J: S: Smith, Present Fort Vancouver, Columbia River  
 Dear Sir,

As you have had a great deal of communication with Mr. McLeod on the subject of your affairs in this quarter in the course of your late Journey to the Umpqua and as that Gentleman is now on the eve of taking his departure hence on a Voyage which may occupy him from 12 to 16 Months I consider it proper that we should come to a final understanding or Settlement on all matters relating to business while he is on the spot and in order to guard against any misapprehension that our communications thereon should be in writing instead of Verbal.--

You are aware that previous to your arrival here in the Month of Aug. last Mr. McLoughlin the Honbl. Coy. principal representative at this place determined on sending a party under the command of Mr. McLeod on a Trapping & Trading Expedition in a Southerly direction from hence & that the equipment of this party was nearly completed when you to our great surprise appeared at this Establisht.

The melancholy report you brought of the destruction of 15 Men out of your party of 19 a few days previous on your way from St Francisco to the Columbia by the Natives of the Umpqua and of the pillage of your property excited in the minds of the Gentlemen here the most lively feelings of Sympathy and comiseration and by those feelings towards you and your unfortunate companions Dr. McLaughlin instructed Mr. McLeod to proceed with his party to the Umpqua to communicate with the Natives, to ascertain the cause of their atrocious conduct, to punish them should it have been considered expedient & found practicable and to endeavour to recover your property.

He accordingly went thither, his party consisting of 38 Servants and Indians and accompanied by you and your surviving followers.--While on the spot he learnt that the Melancholy catastrophe was occasioned by some harsh treatment on the part of your people towards the Indians who visited your Camp some of whom they said had been beaten, and one of them bound hands & feet for some very slight offence; which treatment they further said corroborated in their Minds a report that had preceded you from Indians that your party had been conducting themselves with hostility towards the different Tribes you passed in your way from the Bona Ventura (for which it appears there were some grounds) and that as a measure of Self Preservation they determined on the destruction of your party which its injudicious conduct and unguarded situation enabled those savages to accomplish with little difficulty or danger to themselves--



Mr. McLeod under all circumstances found that it would be unsafe and unpolitic to take any hostile steps against the Tribe but endeavoured to recover of the property of which you had been pillaged and with some trouble and difficulty suc[ceeded?]-he has thus recovered consists of about 700 Beaver Skins, 39 Horses and a few other articles of little value.--

When Mr. McLeod and his party took their departure McLoughlin did not conceive that any inconvenience or delay would have been occasioned by their visit to the Umpqua he did not therefore intend to have made any charge against you for the Services of McLeod & his party in the recovering of your property but the time occupied in visiting the different Camps on the River & Coast with that object we now find has occasioned the loss to us of the Services of this Expedition for the whole Season thereby subjecting us to an expense of exceeding £1000 independent of the loss of Profits we had reason ceded [sic] in getting nearly the whole of it restored--The property to calculate from the Services of this Expedition.

Had you been in the condition of discussing terms with us, we should as a matter of course have insisted on your defraying the expences, that the recovery of your property might have occasioned to us, but you was not in that condition consequently nothing was said on the subject, and altho' we are well aware that either in Law or Equity we should be fully entitled to Salvage, we make no claim thereto, on the contrary place the property which we have recovered at your disposal without any charge or demand whatsoever

In order to suit your own convenience, you left 38 Horses at our Camp on the Umpqua which the Expedition had not the least occasion for as Mr. McLeod having independent of them about 150 being more than sufficient we conceive to meet his demands; these and a few others expected to be received in order to accommodate you we are willing to take off your hands at 40/Stg. p. head, which is a higher price than we ever pay for Horses and the same we charge to our Servants & Trappers but if you are not satisfied with that price, they are still quite at your disposal

In conference you have had with me both toDay and two days ago, you told me that you was desirous of taking your Furs up by Water immediately to our Establishment of Walla Walla, that there you wished us to give you Horses in exchange for those left at the Umpqua and that in the event of our complying with that wish you would leave Horses & Furs at Walla Walla while you proceeded across from thence to your Depot on Salt Lake from whence you would in the course of next Summer send for both.

In reply I now beg to state that we should consider it the height of imprudence in you to attempt going up the Columbia with only your two followers either light or with property.--We a[l]tho' perfectly acquainted with every Indian on the communication rarely venture to send a party even with Letters and with property never less than from 30 to 40 Men; such a measure on your part would therefore in our opinion be sporting with Life or courting danger to madness; which I should not consider myself justified in permitting without pointing out to yourself and followers in presence of witness's the desperate hazards you would thereby run

I should consider it equally imprudent to attempt a Journey from Walla Walla to Salt Lake on many considerations, the most prominent of which are, the great danger to be apprehended from roving War parties, your total ignorance of the Country, the difficulty you would have in finding your way across the Blue Mountains, the inexperience of your



people in Snow Shoe Travelling (one of whom I believe never saw a Snow Shoe) and the danger from Starvation as it is impossible you can carry provisions such a distance and the chase in some parts of the country through which you would have to pass is at this Season even to a hunting party a very precarious means of subsistence.--In reference to your demand upon us for Horses at Walla Walla it cannot be met by any possibility as by the last advices from thence we [have] none at that Establishment and our own business in the Upper parts of the Columbia requires at least five times the number we are likely to be able to collect in the course of next Season

You are well aware that we have already experienced much inconvenience incurred many sacrifices, and exposed the Concern to heavy loss, through our anxious desire to relieve, assist and accommodate you we are willing nevertheless to do whatever else we can without subjecting ourselves to further loss or expense in order to meet your wishes, I shall now suggest what I conceive to be the safest course you can pursue and the most eligible plan you can adopt.

Your Beaver which is of very bad quality the worst indeed I ever saw, having in the first instance been very badly dressed & since then exposed to every storm of Rain that has fallen between the Month of April & the 22nd. Inst. consequently in the very worst state of Damage, I am willing to take off your hands at 3 Dollars p Skin payable by Bill at 30 d/ sight on Canada, which I conceive to be their full value at this place, and your Horses I will take at £2 Stg. p Head payable in like manner But if these terms are not satisfactory to you the Furs may be left here until you have an opportunity of removing them & the Horses are at your disposal where you left them

In either case yourself and followers shall be made welcome to a continuance of our hospitality while you choose to remain at our Establishment--and if agreeable you shall be allowed a passage free of expense to Red River Settlement with me in the course of next Spring & Summer from whence you can proceed to St. Louis by Pra[i]rie du Chien or you may accompany our Snake Country Expedition next Autumn by which means you will in all probability have a safe escort until you fall in with your people at or in the neighborhood of Salt Lake

After you have fully considered these suggestions which are dictated by the best feelings towards you and an intense anxiety for the safety of yourself followers & property I have to request the favor of a reply thereon in Writing previous to M<sup>r</sup> McLeod's departure &

I remain, Dear Sir  
Yo: Mo: Obt. Sert.  
Geo: Simpson

### **Simpson December 29, 1828 Letter to Smith**

Mr. J: S: Smith, Present Fort Vancouver, Columbia River  
Dear Sir,

In reference to your valued communication of 26th Inst., and to our subsequent conferences I beg it to be distinctly understood that we do not lay claim to, nor can we receive any remuneration

for the Services we have rendered you, any indemnification for the losses we have sustained in assisting you, nor any Salvage for the property we have recovered for you, as, whatsoever we have done for you was induced by feelings of benevolence and humanity alone, to which your distressed situation after your late providential escape & the lamentable & melancholy fate of your unfortunate companions gave you every title at our hands.--And I beg to assure you that the satisfaction we derive from these good offices, will repay the Honbl. Hudsons Bay Comp amply for any loss or inconvenience in rendering them I am exceedingly happy that you have consented to abandon the very hazardous Journey you contemplated and that you have allowed yourself to be influenced by my advice to pursue the safer yet more circuitous route by Red River, which notwithstanding the increased distance, will in point of time be the shortest, as thereby you will baring accidents be at St. Louis in the month of July next

With regard to your property, we are willing in order to relieve you from all further concern respecting it, to take it off your hands, at what we consider to be its utmost value here say Horses at 40/. each which you know to be a higher price than we ever pay for any, and Beaver at 3\$ p. Skin Land Otters at 2\$ p. Skin and Sea Otters at 10\$ p. Skin which from their damaged state I conceive to be their utmost value here, fully as much as they will net to us in England, and after making a fair deduction for risk and expence of transport hence to St Louis, more than they would yield you if taken to and sold in the States

But if these prices be not satisfactory to you, and that you prefer leaving your property here until a favourable opportunity should present itself for removing it, we shall with pleasure retain it for you, and deliver it when and to whom you may direct

With Esteem, I remain, Dear Sir  
Yo: Mo: Obt: Sert. Geo: Simpson

### **Simpson March 1, 1829 Dispatch to HBC (Excerpt)**

41. I shall now take the liberty of requesting your Honors attention, to the business of the Snake Country, which for a length of time has attracted the jealous Eye of the United States Government, and called forth the loud complaints of many of their Citizens against us. The boundaries of this Country, are by us considered, the Rocky Mountains on the East, and a chain of mountains running nearly parallel with the Coast on the West: on the North, the 46th parallel of Latitude from the Rocky Mountains 'till it strikes the South branch of the Columbia near its junction with the Main Stream, and on the South, the Waters of the Rio Colorado. And the operations of its Expeditions, may be considered as extending as far in a Southerly & Westerly direction as Beaver can be found. The Southern part of that Country, is occupied by several Tribes of little note; and in regard to the Territorial rights of the Mexican Republic, we follow the example of the Spanish functionaries on the Coast, and our opponents from the United States, by making no enquiries about them, altho' the License of the latter, authorises them to hunt down to Latitude 38. Until the last three or four Years, we have merely been hunting on the Eastern and Northern borders of this Country, but of late we have pushed as far South as Latitude 42, and we have now an Expedition on its way to hunting Grounds in the neighbourhood of St. Francisco, in about Lat. 38. Our largest Expedition was that of 1824, consisting of 58 men, of whom, 38 deserted to the Americans or otherwise left us; its profits amounted to £3700; In 1825 another Expedition of 38 men was fitted out, the profits of which amounted to £3000. In

1826 a party of 30 men was outfitted, whose hunts yielded a profit of about £2000. In 1827 another party of 30 was outfitted the profits on whose hunts amounted to £2500 and in 1828 two parties were fitted out, the one, of 32 Men, proceeding by the Nez Perces Country to hunt in the heart of the Snake Country; and the other, of 30 men, proceeding by the coast, to hunt on the banks of the Buena Ventura [Sacramento River], or wherever they can find Beaver on the West of the Rocky Mountains.

42. It may now be proper, to draw your Honors attention to the operations of our opponents in that quarter. There was an American party in the Snake Country as long ago as 1809 or 1810, who established themselves at a place called (after their Leader) Henrys Forks; but who only remained one Season, finding themselves in danger of being cut off by War parties. Their next visit was in 1824, when Genl. (a Militia Genl.) Ashley of St. Louis, (who notwithstanding his dignified title has had a number of ups and downs in life having been a Farmer a Shopkeeper, a Miner and latterly an Indian Trader) fitted out a large party of Trappers & Servants. Smith the conductor of one of his parties, joined our Expedition in the Autumn of 1824, and passed part of the following Winter at the Flat Head Post, taking the benefit of Mr. Ogden's protection from thence to the Snake country where they parted, and immediately afterwards in return for our hospitality and protection, Gardner the leader of another of Ashleys detachments, on falling in with Mr. Ogden, laid his plans to decoy our Trappers and break up our Expedition, in which he succeeded. Ashley's returns that year amounted to between 5 & 6000 Beaver, a great part of which however was taken out of what is called the "Black feet Country", about the head Waters of the Missouri. In 1825/26 Ashleys party was made up by our Deserters, and a re-enforcement from St. Louis, to about 100 Men, who hunted in small parties all over the Snake Country, and about the Eastern skirts of the Mountains, and collected about the same quantity of Beaver; when, he retired from the business with a fortune, which in Dollars sounded large in the United States, and resumed his Shopkeeping concerns in St. Louis: but the fortune in question, was entirely nominal as the profits arising from the two prosperous years on the West side barely covered the losses sustained during the two preceding years on the East side the Mountains; the fact therefore is, that Ashley gained merely a little eclat by his trapping speculations, notwithstanding all the bombast that appeared in the American Newspapers of 1824, 1825 & 1826 in regard to their "enterprizing Countryman". The Trapping business was then taken up, by three of "the Genls." late conductors; men who had formerly been practical Trappers, but who all at once promoted themselves to the Travelling title of Captains, while their mercantile operations were conducted under the firm of Smith Jackson & Siblitt. Their first year was prosperous having collected from 5 to 6000 Beaver; but since then, they have been very unfortunate. With regard to Jackson & Siblitt, we learn that they had several parties scattered about the Snake Country some of whom Mr. Ogden saw, but they complained of the poverty of the Country, had lost the greater part of their Horses without which they could do little good, and one of their parties consisting of [Samuel] Tullock and Eleven Men we last Autumn understood had been cut off by the Blackfeet. Jackson, accompanied by a Clerk [Thomas] Fitzpatrick, and a Major Pilcher with a Clerk Gardner & 40 Trappers, was the band alluded to as having visited the Flat head Post last Winter; they had very few Skins, and of those few, about half fell into our hands in exchange for some necessary supplies. Pilcher, who made his first appearance on this side the Mountains last Summer, is the head of a Trading association called the "Missouri Fur Coy." of St. Louis, which failed in the year 1825 and 'tis probable the same fate awaits his present concern as it must have been in a desperate state indeed, when the head thereof, could not find better employment for himself and followers than watching the Flat Head

Camp. "The Major", and Smith Jackson & Siblitt, are in hot opposition to each other, and both court our protection and countenance, while we contrive to profit by their strife. Pilcher, has made a formal tender of his Services to the Honble. Coy. by Letter addressed to me, but I have rejected his strange proposition, in terms which will shew the American Govt. if necessary, that we pay due respect to their rights of Territory & Trade, see correspondence. Smith, the head of the Firm of Smith Jackson & Siblitt who now enjoys our hospitality and protection, (and whom I have already noticed as having been with Mr. Ogden at the Flat head Post) has been truly unfortunate, and as the circumstances which placed him here, may become a subject of future misrepresentation and inquiry, I shall now detail them, principally from his own report, for your Honors information. In the Summer of 1826 he started with a party from Salt Lake, for the purpose of Trapping the Rio Colorado, where he got some Beaver; but falling short of Ammunition and other supplies, he proceeded down that Stream until he found the Macabas Tribe, who received him kindly & conducted him to St. Gabriel, where he and his party were treated as Prisoners; but liberated under a promise that he would quit the Spanish Territory; from thence, he proceeded along the Coast to St. Francisco, where he received a few supplies in exchange for Beaver. The Spaniards throughout, looked upon him with much suspicion, he underwent a thousand cross-examinations but they never could believe that his sole object was to hunt Beaver, an animal they scarcely knew by name, altho some of the Rivers within a few miles of their Settlements, abounded therewith: they however permitted him to depart, and as he required additional Strength and supplies, to enable him to hunt this Country, he left Eleven men to trap in the Waters of the "Buena Ventura", and in Spring 1827, he with a couple of men, crossed a Sandy desert of considerable extent (in which he suffered greatly from a scarcity of Water) to their Depot at Salt Lake, where he arrived in the Month of July. After having rested a few Days there, he started again with about 20 men, following his former route by the Rio Colorado, (as he would not attempt to recross the Sandy desert) and as formerly fell in with the Macabas Indians, some of whom it appears had been severely punished by the Spaniards for conducting him on the former occasion to St. Gabriel, and who had instructions to allow no Strangers pass by that route again. These Indians at first received him kindly as before, but soon took an opportunity when off their guard, and while Swimming across the River, to attack the party, Ten of whom they succeeded in destroying. Smith and his surviving followers, however, got down to St. Gabriel a second time, where they were again made Prisoners and detained for several weeks, but at length permitted to go to St. Francisco where their second appearance excited more astonishment and alarm if possible than before. Here, they were again confined, and examined in all manner of ways, and it was here that Lieut. [AEmilius] Simpson saw him in December 1827: he was however permitted again to depart early in January 1828, after having purchased about 300 Horses with the proceeds of his Beaver. These Horses cost about 10 \$ each, and had they reached the Depot would have met a ready Sale to his Free Trappers at 50 \$ each. Smiths party now united with those left hunting when he crossed the Sandy desert in Spring 1827, amounted to 19 in all. From St. Francisco they took a Northerly course along the north branch of the Buena Ventura, found the River well stocked with Beaver, but only hunted while it was necessary to rest their Horses; his object being, to push on to the Depot with the Horses, and conduct a large body of Trappers back in order to scour the country, they however caught about a Thousand Beaver. Their object in taking this Northerly course, was to fall upon the Wilhamot, and proceed either by the Columbia or across Country from thence to Salt Lake, being desirous of avoiding the circuitous route by the Rio Colorado,

and unwilling to attempt cutting across the Sandy desert: but they found the country much more rugged & mountainous than they expected, and were obliged to pass round by the Coast. In the course of this Journey, they repeatedly fell in with Indians whom (we learn from other Tribes) they regarded as Enemies. At length they reached the Umpqua River in July last, distant from hence about 150 Miles, where they encamped to recruit their Horses. While at that Encampment. Smith with a couple of Men and an Indian, went in search of a favorable route for their Horses, leaving 16 Men in the Camp which was surrounded by a large body of Indians, who appeared to be on a friendly visit to them, but who at a given Signal attacked the Camp, and destroyed the whole party, except one man who saved himself by darting into the Woods. Smith, on his return in a Small canoe fortunately discovered before landing, that the massacre had taken place, otherwise he would have shared the fate of his comrades; but with his two men paddled to the opposite side of the River, and saved themselves by flight into the Woods. The man who escaped from the dreadful camp scene, fell into the hands of Friendly Indians, by whom he was conducted to this Establishment, and Smith with his two followers made their appearance here a few Days afterwards, on the 10th of August, where they were received with every kindness and hospitality.

43. At the time of Smith's arrival, Chief Factor McLoughlin was fitting out a trapping party to hunt under the direction of Chief Trader McLeod, in a Southerly direction from hence along the Coast. This party was to start a few Days afterwards, and with the double object of recovering Smith's property all of which fell into the hands of the Indians, and of enquiring into the cause of, and punishing those who were concerned in the horrible outrage if found practicable and considered expedient, Mr. McLeod was directed to conduct his Expedition by the Umpqua, which he did accompanied by Smith. On arrival there Mr. McLeod Summoned the principal chief [Starnoosie] and his followers to the camp, which they obeyed, and in answer to the queries put to them as to the cause of the massacre, they said, That previous to Smith's arrival they had notice of the approach of his party, from some of the Tribes he had passed, with intimation that they were Enemies destroying all the Natives that came within their reach. That this information was in some degree confirmed by their severely beating and binding the hands and feet of one of their own Tribe who had pilfered an axe, (a very slight offence in their estimation). That they declared themselves to be people of a different nation from us, and our Enemies, and therefore intended to drive us from the Columbia where we were intruders on their Territory. These circumstances, they said, induced them to look on the party with suspicion, but they had not formed any plan of destruction, until one of them "Rogers" a Clerk, in Smith's absence, attempted to force a Woman into his Tent, whose Brother was knocked down by Rogers while endeavouring to protect her; upon which, seeing the opportunity favorable, as some of the people were asleep, others Eating and none on their guard, they rose in a body and dispatched the whole party except the man who fled. Some parts of this Statement, Smith denies but the whole story is well told, and carries the probability of truth along with it. Mr. McLeod might have taken the lives of several of the Murderers; but had he done so, it would have involved us in eternal Warfare with a very numerous and powerful Nation, with whom we have been on Friendly terms for several years, whose Trade is of importance to us and in whose power our Trapping and Trading parties would frequently be; he therefore considered it prudent as regarded our own safety, and politic as regarded the interests of the Service, to abstain from violence; but took much trouble in recovering such part of the property as was within a convenient reach. The property thus recovered through Mr. McLeod's exertion and influence, was from 7 to 800 Beaver & Otter Skins in a very damaged state, 40 Horses, and a few other articles of little

value. This business occupied much time, from the latter end of August until the month of December, and I am concerned to say has occasioned the loss of the Services of this Expedition for the Season. Mr. McLeod came back to this Establishmt. for further instructions, accompanied by Smith, leaving his Expedition at the Umpqua, and after remaining here a few Days started afresh with directions to proceed to the Southward, as p. copy of my Letter of instructions of 29th December herewith transmitted.

44. Smith soon afterwards intimated his intention of proceeding to his Depot at Salt Lake, but the undertaking appeared to me so hazardous, that I remonstrated against it, and he fell in with a proposition made by me, to take his Furs and Horses at a given price as p. account, and to give him a passage to Red River in Spring, from whence he can with little risk push his way to St. Louis. All my business communications with this person, have been by Letter, under Dates 26th & 29th Decemr. copies of which with his answers are herewith transmitted; and altho' we have sustained considerable loss, by our endeavors to be of Service to him, we have no doubt that your Honors will approve the feeling by which we were actuated and the course we persued\_in reference to this melancholy affair.

45. From the foregoing statements, in which to guard against misrepresentation I have considered it proper to be particular, altho' I fear your Honors will find them prolix; it will appear that there is a probability of our being relieved from Opposition in the Snake Country for a time. That Country has never been rich for its extent, and is now much exhausted; but if undisturbed by the Americans, it will afford employment to a party of 30 to 40 men for several years to come, and while it even defrays the expences of such a party, we consider it good policy to keep them in that quarter. The Expedition under the command of Mr. Ogden will be in, so as to forward its returns by the Ship of this Season. That under Mr. McLeod will I think work the whole of the Buena Ventura before its return, which may be expected in the Month of September or October 1830 and if either of those Gentlemen discover fresh hunting grounds in the course of their present campaigns, we shall take the necessary measures to occupy them.

46. The American Trapping Expeditions are never sufficiently well organised to hold together for any length of time: the heads of the concern or Outfitters, are merely adventurers who have nothing to lose, and are ever on the watch to take some petty advantage of their followers, who being aware of this, have no respect for, and are always ready to cheat them in their turn. The conductors or Leaders of parties, are men who have been common Trappers, and therefore possess no influence: and the Trappers themselves are generally speaking, people of the worst character, run-aways from Jails, and outcasts from Society, who take all their bad qualities along with them: this "motley crew" acknowledge no master, will conform to no rules or regulations, and are never on their guard, so that they are frequently cut off and their camps plundered. When they fall in with Friendly Indians, their conduct is so indiscreet that they scarcely ever fail to make Enemies of them, and it is a well known fact, that War parties frequently pass our Camps without offering the least annoyance; yet will haunt and watch an American Camp, for Days and Weeks, until a favorable opportunity occurs to make an attack. We might repeatedly have broken up their parties, but the spirit of insubordination which characterises those fellows, is particularly infectious in the plains, we therefore allow as little intercourse as possible between them and our people, and in order to guard against the baneful influence of bad example, do not encourage desertion and have not at present above 10 or 12 of their people in our Service.

## London HBC October 28, 1830 Letter to McLoughlin

We are much gratified to hear that every hospitable attention and assistance were offered to Mr. Smith the American and his Companions in distress after the horrible massacre of his party by the natives of the Umpqua, and from the humane feeling you have already manifested it is scarcely necessary to desire, that you will on all occasions render any protection in your power to Americans, Russians, or any other strangers who may be in the Country against the treachery or violence of the natives whatever may be the objects of the visits of such strangers, be they competitors in trade or otherwise, as all feeling of self interest must be laid aside when we can relieve or assist our fellow creatures

## SJ&S October 29, 1830 Letter to John Eaton

*[The letter of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette forms part of Senate Executive Documents 39, 21st Congress, 2d session, pp. 21-23. The whole document is taken up with a consideration of "the state of the British establishments in the valley of the Columbia, and the state of the fur trade, as carried on by the citizens of the United States and the Hudson's Bay Company," as shown in the communications of Gen. W. H. Ashley, Joshua Pilcher, J. D. Smith, David B. Jackson, and W. L. Sublette, and William Clark and Lewis Cass.]*

St. Louis, October 29, 1830.

To the Hon. John H. Eaton, Secretary of War.

Sir: The business commenced by General Ashley some years ago, of taking furs from the United States territory beyond the Rocky Mountains has since been continued by Jedediah S. Smith, David E. Jackson, and William L. Sublette, under the firm of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette. They commenced business in 1826, and have since continued it, and have made observations and gained information which they think it important to communicate to the government.

The number of men they have employed has usually been from eighty to one hundred and eighty; and with these, divided into parties, they have traversed every part of the country west of the Rocky Mountains, from the peninsula of California to the mouth of the Columbia River. Pack horses, or rather mules, were at first used, but in the beginning of the present year, it was determined to try wagons, and in the month of April last, on the 10th day of the month, a caravan of ten wagons, drawn by five mules each, and two dearborns, drawn by one mule each, set out from St. Louis. We have eighty-one men in company, all mounted on mules, and these were exclusive of a party left in the mountains. Our route from St. Louis was nearly due west to the western limits of the state and thence along the Santa Fe trail about forty miles, from which the course was some degrees north of west, across the waters of the Kansas, and up the Great Platte River, to the Rocky Mountains, and to the head of Wind River, where it issues from the mountains. This took us until the 16th of July, and was as far as we wished the wagons to go, as the furs to be brought in were to be collected at this place, which is, or was this year, the great rendezvous of the persons engaged in that business. Here the wagons could easily have crossed the Rocky Mountains, it being what is called the Southern [South] Pass, had it been desirable for them to do so, which it was not for the reason stated. For our support, at leaving the Missouri settlements, until we should get into the buffalo country, we drove twelve head of cattle, beside a milk cow. Eight of these only being required for use before we got to the buffaloes, the others went on to the head of Wind River. We began to fall in with the buffaloes on the Platte, about



three hundred and fifty miles from the white settlements, and from that time lived on buffaloes, the quantity being infinitely beyond what we needed. On the fourth of August, the wagons being in the meantime loaded with furs which had been previously taken, we set out on the return to St. Louis. All the high points of the mountains then in view were white with snow, but the passes and valleys, and all the level country, were green with grass. Our route back was over the same ground nearly as in going out, and we arrived at St. Louis on the 10th of October, bringing back the ten wagons, the dearborns being left behind: four of the oxen and the milk cow were also brought back to the settlements in Missouri, as we did not need them for provision. Our men were all healthy during the whole time, we suffered nothing by the Indians, and had no accident but the death of one man, being buried under a bank of earth that fell in upon him, and another being crippled at the same time. Of the mules, we lost but one by fatigue, and two horses stolen by the Kansas Indians; the grass being, along the whole route going and coming, sufficient for the support of the horses and mules. The usual weight in the wagons was about one thousand eight hundred pounds. The usual progress of the wagons was from fifteen to twenty-five miles per day. The country being almost all open, level, and prairie, the chief obstructions were ravines and creeks, the banks of which required cutting down, and for this purpose a few pioneers were generally kept ahead of the caravan. This is the first time that wagons ever went to the Rocky Mountains, and the ease and safety with which it was done prove the facility of communicating overland with the Pacific Ocean. The route from the Southern Pass, where the wagons stopped, to the Great Falls of the Columbia, being easier and better than on this side of the mountains, with grass enough for horses and mules, but a scarcity of game for the support of men. One of the undersigned, to wit, Jedediah S. Smith, in his excursion west of the mountains, arrived at the post of the Hudson's Bay Company, called Fort Vancouver, near the mouth of Multnomah River. He arrived there in August, 1828, and left the 12th of March, 1829, and made observations which he deems it material to communicate to the government. Fort Vancouver is situated on the north side of the Columbia, five miles above the mouth of the Multnomah, in a handsome prairie, and on a second bank about three quarters of a mile from the river. This is the fort as it stood when he arrived there; but a large one, three hundred feet square about three quarters of a mile lower down, and within two hundred yards of the river, was commenced the spring he came away. Twelve pounders were the heaviest cannon which he saw. The crop of 1828 was seven hundred bushels of wheat, the grain full and plump, and making good flour, fourteen acres of corn, the same number of acres in peas, eight acres of oats, four or five acres of barley, a fine garden, some small apple trees, and grape vines. The ensuing spring eighty bushels of seed wheat were sown. About two hundred head of cattle, fifty horses and breeding mares, three hundred head of hogs, fourteen goats, the usual domestic fowls. They have mechanics of various kinds, to wit, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, carpenters, coopers, tinner, and baker. A good sawmill on the bank of the river five miles above, a grist mill worked by hand, but intended to work by water. They had built two coasting vessels, one of which was then on a voyage to the Sandwich Islands.

No English or white woman was at the fort, but a great number of mixed blood Indian extraction, such as belong to the British fur trading establishments, who were treated as wives, and the families of children taken care of accordingly. So that everything seemed to combine to prove that this fort was to be a permanent establishment. At Fort Vancouver the goods for the Indian trade are imported from London, and enter the territories of the United States paying no duties, and from the same point the furs taken on the other side of the mountains are shipped. The annual quantity of these furs could not be exactly ascertained, but Mr. Smith was informed indirectly that they amounted to about thirty thousand beaver skins, besides otter skins and small furs. The beaver skins alone, at New York prices, would be worth above two hundred and fifty

thousand dollars. To obtain these furs, both trapping and trading are resorted to. Various parties, provided with traps, spread over the country south of the Columbia to the neighborhood of the Mexican territory, and in 1824 and 1825 they crossed the Rocky Mountains and trapped on the waters of the Missouri River. They do not trap north of latitude 49 degrees, but confine that business to the territory of the United States. Thus this territory, being trapped by both parties, is nearly exhausted of beavers, and unless the British can be stopped, will soon be entirely exhausted, and no place left within the United States where beaver fur in any quantity can be obtained.

The inequality of the convention with Great Britain in 1818 is most glaring and apparent, and its continuance is a great and manifest injury to the United States. The privileges granted by it have enabled the British to take possession of the Columbia River, and spread over the country south of it; while no Americans have ever gone, or can venture to go on the British side. The interest of the United States and her citizens engaged in the fur trade requires that the convention of 1818 should be terminated, and each nation confined to its own territories. By this commercial interest there are other considerations requiring the same result. These are, the influence which the British have already acquired over the Indians in that quarter, and the prospect of a British colony, and a military and naval station on the Columbia. Their influence over the Indians is now decisive. Of this the Americans have constant and striking proofs in the preference which they give to the British in every particular.

In saying this, it is an act of justice to say, also, that the treatment received by Mr. Smith at Fort Vancouver was kind and hospitable; that, personally, he owes thanks to Governor Simpson and the gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company, for the hospitable entertainment which he received from them, and for the efficient and successful aid which they gave him in recovering from the Umquah Indians a quantity of fur and many horses, of which these Indians had robbed him in 1828.

As to the injury which must happen to the United States from the British getting the control of all the Indians beyond the mountains, building and repairing ships in the tide water region of the Columbia, and having a station there for their privateers and vessels of war, is too obvious to need a recapitulation. The object of this communication being to state facts to the Government, and to show the facility of crossing the continent to the Great Falls of the Columbia with wagons, the ease of supporting any number of men by driving cattle to supply them where there was no buffalo, and also to show the true nature of the British establishments on the Columbia, and the unequal operation of the convention of 1818.

These facts being communicated to the Government, they consider that they have complied with their duty, and rendered an acceptable service to the administration; and respectfully request you, sir, to lay it before President Jackson.

We have the honor to be sir, yours, respectfully,  
Jedediah S. Smith, David E. Jackson, William L. Sublette

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

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