



CASTOR CANADENSIS

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SITE OF THE SMITH MASSACRE ON JULY 14, 1828

EDITED BY LANCASTER POLLARD

"The Site of the Smith Massacre on July 14, 1828," edited by Lancaster Pollard, was originally published in Oregon Historical Quarterly, 45:2 (June 1944): 133-37. It is reproduced here with permission from the Oregon Historical Quarterly, which is the journal of record for Oregon history and has been published continuously since 1900 by the Oregon Historical Society." The Board of Directors of the Jedediah Smith Society felt this article, which is significant in determining the exact location of the Massacre Site, be republished so more of our members can be more aware of this important site.

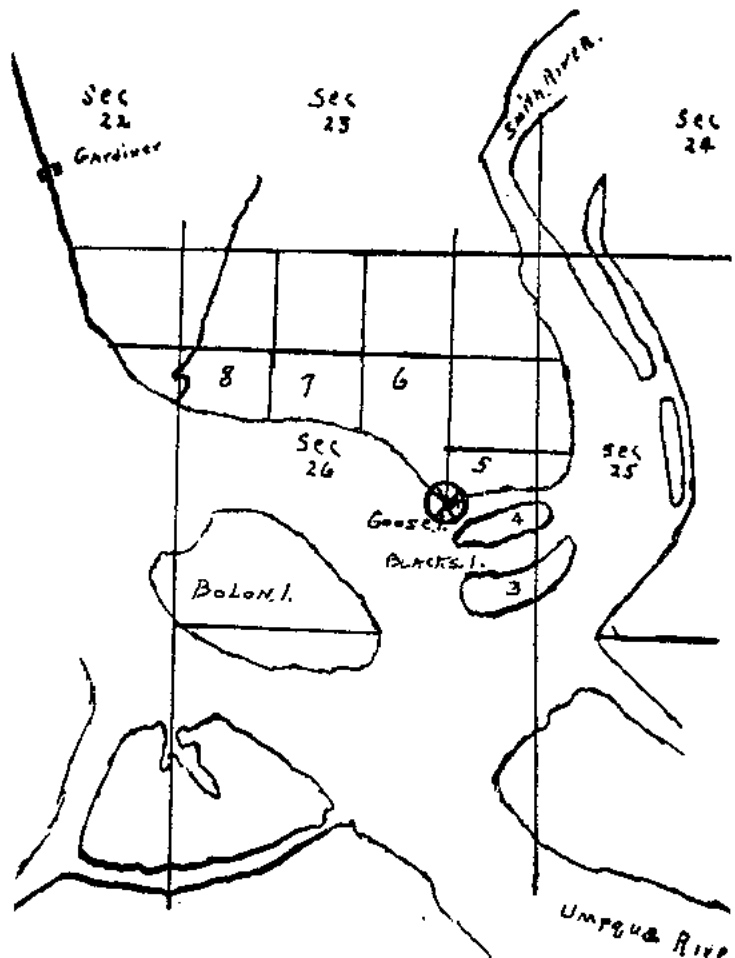
THE EXACT LOCATION of the site on the Umpqua River where fifteen members of the Jedediah Smith party were killed by Indians on July 14, 1828, has not heretofore been determined. It now seems that this minor, but interesting, point in fur-trade and Oregon history is cleared up through the entries in the field note book kept by Harvey Gordon on a surveying trip made in 1857-58.

A transcript of those notes, covering Sec. 26, T21S, R12W, and a tracing of a part of the accompanying map, were recently presented to the Society through the courtesy of one of its members.

Until the present time, nothing has been written concerning the location of the Smith massacre which has given any authority other than legendary tradition, and the spot has been located in several places.

In his notes Gordon states that a certain spot is the "place where Indians murdered eleven men in the employ of Smith . . ." These notes, inasmuch as they are a part of the United States Land Office records, may be accepted as correct; it does not necessarily follow, however, that Gordon's location is the exact spot, although the probabilities are that it is. His information was acquired and recorded only thirty years after the incident. He had access to the knowledge of the pioneer white residents of Gardiner, who first settled there twenty-two years after the massacre. More important, he had access to the knowledge of the Indians. In the preliminaries to his notes, Gordon states that he had employed a party of Indians; natives who were twenty-one years old at the time of the massacre would have been but fifty-one at the time of Gordon's survey. It is by no means improbable that some of the natives in his employ may have taken part in the massacre. All could have had knowledge of the exact location; it can hardly be questioned that many did have.

As to the Gordon statement that eleven men were killed: it is accepted that Smith and his party numbered nineteen in all and that four—Smith, Black, Turner and Leland—survived. This left fifteen as being killed. The seeming discrepancy is easily explained. Alexander R. McLeod, of the Hudson's Bay Company, arrived at the scene in October of 1828 with his relief expedition. They reported finding eleven skeletons. Black, in his account of his escape states that "Davis [Daws] was in the water and Indians were pursuing him in a canoe."



Continued on page 2

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It is probable that the four members of the party unaccounted for also tried to escape by swimming and were killed in the stream or at some distance from the camp site where the others were massacred.¹

The change of compass course in Gordon's survey notes is exactly on the south end of the west line of Lot 5. Gardiner (formerly East Gardiner) Station on the Southern Pacific Railroad is in Sec. 25, approximately 150 feet east of the north line of Lot 5. The spot located by Gordon is marked by a circled cross on the map here reproduced. This map is a tracing of a part of the official map of the survey made by Gordon under U. S. Contract No. 69, let February 2, 1857, and filed as completed September 6, 1858.

The notebook is in the United States Land Office at Portland, as is also Gordon's map. One place named on Gordon's map differs from that in current use: what is now known as Perkins Island is named "Goose Island."

In the following transcript of Gordon's notes the first column is compass course, the second is distance as measured in chains (of sixty-six feet).

Notes covering Meander Line, Umpqua River from approximately the mouth to Smith River, along north shore. Contract Townships, Subdivisions, Meanders, dated Feb. 2nd, 1857, to Harvey Gordon, all filed as completed September 6th, 1858.

Twp. [21] S., R. 12 W., Willamette Meridian.

South between Secs. 19 and 20.

9.00 to right bank of Umpqua R. Set post, raised a mound of stone.

Land mountainous, soil 3rd rate.

In this township, and all others to be surveyed under the meanders of this contract, the forest is so dense that camp cannot be transported on horses, and I am obliged at extraordinary expense to employ a party of Indians for that purpose on all the land lines; but on the meanders, one of the assistants with a canoe is sufficient.

Therefore, as a measure of economy that portion of the survey is omitted until I can discharge the Indians.

Nov. 13, 1857.

N. 11°	E	34.50	To meander corner in Sec. 19
N. 20°	E	7.50	in Sec. 19
North		8.00	About N. end of Reservation— not pointed out
N. 5°	E	6.00	
N. 24°	W	2.50	
N. 13°	E	8.00	
N. 48°	E	7.00	
N. 28°	E	18.00	
N. 23°	E	10.00	Leave Sand hills on shore
N. 20°	E	10.00	To meander corner
N. 42°	E	12.00	In Sec. 20 to meander post

N. 35°	E	5.50	In Sec. 17
N. 54°	E	5.60	Rocky Bluffs
N. 36°	E	5.40	
N. 57°	E	5.50	
N. 37°	E	5.40	
N. 53°	E	10.00	
N. 41°	E	12.20	To S. W. Corner of S. Scholfield's claim
N. 63°	E	5.00	
N. 82°	E	5.00	High Rocky Bluff
N. 73°	E	15.00	" " "
N. 60°	E	15.00	To meander corner
East		5.00	In Sec. 16
N. 57°	E	5.00	Bluffs
N. 86°	E	26.00	"
N. 83°	E	18.00	
S. 63°	E	15.00	to lower end of marsh
S. 43°	E	18.00	to meander post
S. 50°	E	2.00	in Sec. 15
S. 55°	E	6.00	marshy shore
S. 38°	E	11.00	
S. 25°	E	20.40	at 9.00 Creek 100 links to meander corner
S. 30°	E	9.00	in Sec. 20 at 5.00. Stream 50 links wide.
S. 23°	E	13.00	marshy shore
East		2.00	" "
South		4.00	Marsh subject to inundation by highest tide
S. 45°	E	2.00	
South		3.50	Land 1st and 2nd rate
S. 35°	E	5.00	
S. 18°	E	34.00	To Cooper's Wharf. U.S. Custom House and Gardiner P. O.
S. 20°	E	14.00	To meander post
S. 18°	E	10.00	In Sec. 27. leave marsh
S. 36°	E	10.00	Rocky Bluffs
S. 35°	E	10.00	
S. 55°	E	5.00	
S. 82°	E	8.00	To meander post—at 7.00. Creek 25 links wide.
S. 36°	E	4.00	In Sec. 26
S. 87°	E	32.00	Rocky Bluffs
S. 76°	E	10.00	To marsh shore
S. 49°	E	21.00	Place where Indians murdered eleven men in the employ of Smith, Sublette & Co., about thirty years ago.
N. 74°	E	10.00	Up Smith's River on right bank
S. 79°	E	11.00	To meander post
N. 77°	E	5.00	In Sec. 25
N. 37°	E	5.00	Leave marsh
N. 7°	E	10.00	
N. 7°	W	5.00	Rocky Bluffs

1. For accounts of the Smith massacre see: Rich, E. E., Ed., *The Letters John McLoughlin . . . First Series*, 1941, pp. 68-70; Sullivan, Maurice S., *The Travels of Jedediah Smith*, 1934, pp. 107-111, 113; Sullivan, Maurice S., *Jedediah Smith*, 1936, pp. 174-179.

**The Jedediah Smith Resources
at the
University of the Pacific
Holt-Atherton Special Collections**

Written by Ed Sieckert, MS

This column will issue quarterly within *Castor Canadensis*. Its objective will be to discuss and share what is in the Collection with students, researchers, genealogists and the public.

First let me introduce myself; I am a retired Agricultural Scientist who spent my career in product development and forensic agriculture. I am a relative of Jedediah S. Smith and have always been interested in Far West history. Recently I completed archiving the Standard Lumber Company Collection of 600 maps at the Tuolumne County Archives with two other historians. I am now active in cataloging the UOP Special Collections maps in cooperation with Michael Wurtz, Head of Special Collections. In this collection I have found a number of maps that deal with Jed Smith's first and second journeys into California.

The UOP **Holt - Atherton Special Collections** is part of the University's William Knox Holt Library and houses not just the Jedediah Smith collection but also the John Muir collections of letters, drawings, journals, and his personal library. The JSS is very fortunate to have Michael Wurtz, an experienced archivist who is interested in the Far West and his staff Trish Roberts and Nicole Grady to manage this great resource for all of us. If you are in the area or need to research a Jed Smith topic you will find a great staff to greet and help you with your needs on arrival. The contact number is (209) 946-2404. You may also access the website: go.pacific.edu/specialcollections. In addition there is a great reading room with tables surrounded by part of the Jedediah Smith and John Muir collections. At each publication date the column will focus on one specific area of the Jed Smith Collection. If you have any questions email me at ed@sieckert.com.

Four important collections are indexed and can be found at the following link; go.pacific.edu/specialcollections Once you are at the Special Collections page you need to look for the search space box

“Search Pacific Finding Aids”: Enter Jedediah Smith and the following Collection titles will open up:

1. [Smith \(Jedediah\) Society Collection 1943-present](#)
2. [Sullivan \(Maurice S.\) Papers on Jedediah Smith](#)

3. [Smith/Bacon Family Collection 1821-1947](#)

4. [Atherton \(Warren H.\) Papers, 1891-1976](#)

Once you are in the page open a collection and look at the right column to find “Container List” This is an index of the collection. Having the index prior to your visit will save time when you go to the Library to ask for a specific box and title. The genealogy of the Jedediah Smith Society collection a great resource for all. In addition the Jedediah Smith Society maintains a great website at: www.jedediahsmithsociety.org.

The map (Fig. 1) below is part of the National Historic Trails groups of Jedediah Smith maps completed in 1984 by the National Park Service. The maps show various portions of his first and second journeys in the West.

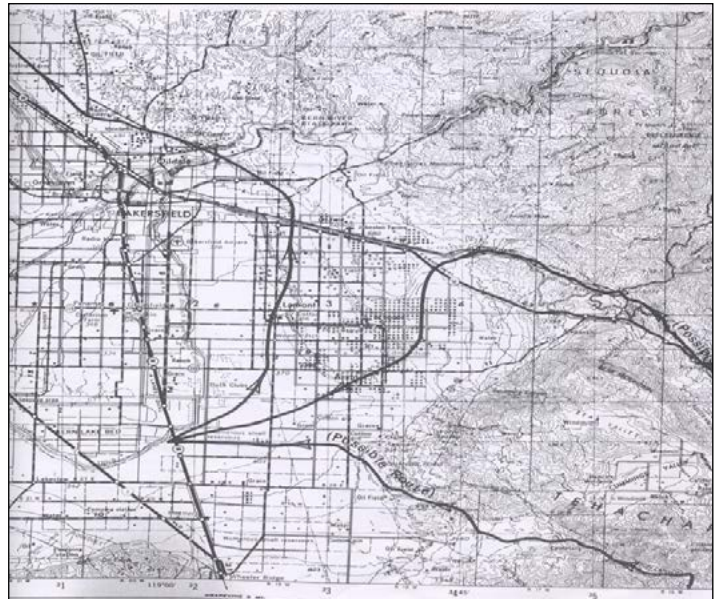


Fig. 1 The 2 possible 1826 trail routes through the Tehachapi Mountains into Kern Lake area of the Bakersfield California area.

If a researcher is looking to follow a portion of Jed Smith's trails these series of maps can serve as a starting point for your work. The maps are broken down into sections which allow for easy location. These maps and his journals will aid in documenting further research into developing a new map.

INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN

Jedediah Smith Society membership is open to all who wish to join in support of research, preservation and information about the 1st American arriving overland 1826 and other California pioneers of the 18th & 19th centuries.

Student	\$10.00	Individual	\$20.00
Sponsor	\$50.00	Patron	\$100.00

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Please make check payable to: JEDEDIAH SMITH SOCIETY
Bob Shannon, P.O. Box 7937, Stockton, CA 95267

Note from the Editor

Over four years ago when our Director and Editor, Al Clover passed away, I took over the editor position of the "Castor Canadensis" more out of necessity rather than out of skill or desire! During this time I have put much effort into preparing this publication which now I feel needs to be redirected towards other equally important tasks in my life. Therefore I am resigning from this position. I would like to thank all of you who have encouraged and supported me through your kind words, articles and technical support. Jedediah Strong Smith and his history is a big part of my life and I still plan to continue researching and following his trail. My biggest regret in this resignation is that there is no one at this time to fill this position when I leave! If any members have an interest in this, please contact the Society at (209) 473-3225 or by mail. The major part of this position is finding suitable articles and materials to fill each issue and your residence location is not an issue because the whole process is done through the internet via e-mails.

Joe J. Molter



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Dues will expire Jan 1st

