



The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah Smith: His Personal Account of the Journey to California, 1826-1827

Jedediah S. Smith

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Jedediah S. Smith was to western exploration what Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Edison were to the world of invention—a legendary figure kiting into the unknown, a lighter of the dark. No one did more to open the American West than this mountain man. His greatest exploring expedition came in 1826 when he looked to the Southwest for trapping grounds.

Jedediah Smith's route ran, in modern terms, from Soda Springs in Idaho to the Great Salt Lake, southward across Utah, along the Colorado River to the Mojave Desert, and westward to California. When he reached the San Gabriel mission there, he could claim to be the first American to have gone overland through the Southwest. Then Smith marched northward through the San Joaquin Valley and, with two companions, embarked across the Great Basin. In traveling to the rendezvous of 1827 they became the first citizens of the United States ever to cross the Sierra eastbound and the Great Basin.

That is the itinerary described in *The Southwest Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith*, which contains the mountain man's long-lost journals. After coming to light in 1967, they were edited by George R. Brooks and published in a limited edition a decade later. This Bison Book reprint brings a scarce historical record to a wider audience.

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