

**An Auto Tour for the
2024 National Fur Trade Symposium**

Where It Happened Smith, Clyman and Fitzpatrick's Adventures of 1824

**Thursday, September 12, 2024, 9am to 3pm
Sunday, September 15, 2024, 9:30am to 3:30pm**

What is this tour?

History, as it is described in books, often does not give the reader a clear sense of the country where a story took place. After Jedediah Smith and his party of trappers were unable to cross the snowbound Wind River mountains, over what is now called Union Pass, the Crow people told them of a better route through a low point to the south. The terrain played an important part in those first months of 1824. Using the route recommended by the Crow, Smith arrived in the Green River valley, where his party split up and made a successful hunt. In the summer of 1824, James Clyman and Thomas Fitzpatrick started eastward toward the settlements, and again, the land played a major part in their journey. While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact spots where events took place, the land Smith and his men traveled has kept much of its character for the past 200 years. The point of this tour is to reconnect the land to the story and give history its backdrop. Along our way we will follow Smith and his rediscovery of South Pass. In addition, we will see areas where James Clyman and Thomas Fitzpatrick's began their adventurous return to the settlements.

Guided by Scott Walker

The same tour will be held twice in opposite directions

Inbound Tour: Thursday, September 12, 2024:

Begin at Bessemer Bend National Historic Site at 9am

End at Farson around 2pm. From there you will be on your own to get to Pinedale, which is about an hour's north of Farson.

To be able to make it to our first rendezvous point at Bessemer Bend NHS at 9am, consider spending the night of September 11 in Casper, WY.

Outbound Tour: Sunday, September 15, 2024:

Begin at Farson at 9:30am. Farson is 1 hour south of Pinedale.

End at Bessemer Bend National Historic Site about 3pm.

This will mean making an early start from Pinedale to reach the starting point on time, but this schedule will have you arriving in Casper in the mid-afternoon with time left to make a few more miles on your return journey.

Scroll down to find the directions and stops for the tour.

Auto Caravan: You will use your own vehicle to travel a series of stops along a one-way (350 mile) route from near Casper, Wyoming to Pinedale, Wyoming as if coming to rendezvous or in reverse as if leaving rendezvous. Your guide will discuss the fur trade history, primarily in 1824, that happened at or near each stop.

Stops & Driving Directions: An outline of stops and driving directions from stop to stop for both inbound and outbound tours are included below. GPS coordinates for each stop have also been included that can be entered in to cell phone or car mapping apps.

Registration: The guided tours are free, but you are encouraged to register for the tour to aid in logistics and to ensure everyone intended is present. Register by providing all attendee names and a cell phone contact for each auto by either emailing symposium@mmmuseum.com or calling 307-367-4101.

Things to Bring: Some of the areas along the tour are semi-remote, and cell phone coverage can be spotty. Distances are relatively long. It is recommended you bring water and snacks in your car. Riverton has fast food and Farson has a restaurant. Fuel is available at points along the way, but can be expensive. You should start the tour with a full tank of gas. A Wyoming state road map would be helpful for general orientation. September weather in Wyoming can be anything from clear and hot to cold and snowing. Make sure you have a sun hat, a fleece jacket/sweater, and a rain jacket. At one stop there will be an optional 1.3-mile walk on flat ground, so comfortable, closed-toe shoes are a good idea – **AVOID FLIPFLOPS!**

INBOUND TOUR

(Scroll down for the outbound tour)

Thursday, September 12, 2024

Meet at Stop 1 at 9am

(about 30 minutes west of Casper)

Stop 1 - Bessemer Bend National Historic Site

(GPS [42.77039, 106.5306](#) for cell phone or car map app)

Take WY 220 out of Casper, northwest toward Alcova, WY.

Near mile marker 106, turn right on Bessemer Bend Rd., Follow this road 2.1 miles to the site. Pit toilets available

Why here? This is the general area where, in 1812, Robert Stuart and his six companions built their first winter quarters during their trek from the Columbia River to St. Louis. Earlier in their trek, Native Americans told Stuart and his group of an easy route across the Rocky Mountains, what became known as South Pass. Stuart used the pass on their way to the settlements, and told of the route when he got back to St. Louis. Because of Robert Stuart, the Jedediah Smith party would have had at least a vague idea of the existence of South Pass.

Stop 2 - Bishop Point kiosk

(GPS [42.5016, -106.8948](#))

From Bessemer Bend NHS, return to WY 220 via Bessemer Bend Rd.

Turn right onto WY 220 toward Alcova, drive for 22.8 miles.

Turn left off WY 220 onto Pathfinder Dam Rd. Watch for this sign for Pathfinder Dam on the left side of WY 220:

Drive south on Pathfinder Dam Rd. (Road 409) for 3.5 miles. Turn right at the Bishop Point sign onto a dirt road (drive slowly, there is some light washboard) for 3.2 miles to the Bishop Point kiosk, the pullout is on the right



of road. Do not go all the way to the water, stop at the kiosk pullout. No facilities. **Why here?** As you look toward the water from the Bishop Point kiosk, you are seeing the Sweetwater River, now flooded by Pathfinder Reservoir. As you look left, you are looking toward the confluence of the Sweetwater and the North Platte Rivers. This area figured into the stories of James Clyman and the Thomas Fitzpatrick party as they began their journey to the settlements in the summer of 1824.

Stop 3 – Fremont Canyon Overlook

(GPS [42.4714, -106.7952](#))

From the Bishop Point kiosk, return 3.2 miles to Pathfinder Dam Rd. (Road 409). Turn right onto Pathfinder Dam Rd. and drive 3.1 miles to the intersection with Fremont Canyon Rd. (Road 408).

Turn left onto Fremont Canyon Rd. and drive 3.9 miles to the Fremont Canyon overlook and picnic area. Pit toilets available.

Why here? When most people hear the words “North Platte River,” they picture the shallow, broad river course that winds through Eastern Wyoming and Western Nebraska. In this area, the North Platte has a different character which explains boat wrecks mentioned in the historical record.

Stop 4 – Independence Rock rest area

(GPS [42.4936, -107.1370](#))

From the Fremont Canyon overlook, backtrack your route on Fremont Canyon Rd. and Pathfinder Dam Rd. to return to WY 220.

Turn left onto WY 220 and drive for 17.6 miles.

Turn left into the Independence Rock rest area.

There is a 1.3-mile trail around the rock, and access to the top of the rock from the east side. Flush toilets on site.

Why here? Independence Rock was yet to be named in 1824, but its prominence along the Sweetwater River made it a landmark during Thomas Fitzpatrick’s trek to the settlements that summer.

Stop 5 – Devil’s Gate overlook

(GPS [42.4372, -107.2176](#))

Turn left out of Independence Rock rest area onto HWY 220 and drive 5.8 miles. Turn right into Devil’s Gate overlook pullout. No facilities.

Why here? Devil's Gate is not mentioned in the 1824 primary sources; however, it is worth a quick look to see why this would not be a likely scene for a boat wreck.

Stop 6 – Sweetwater Station Rest Area

(GPS [42.5444, -108.1885](#))

From the overlook, continue west on WY 220 for 13.4 miles to Muddy Gap. Turn right onto US HWY 287 (HWY 789) near the Muddy Gap gas station. Head toward Lander.

WARNING! DO NOT continue straight at Muddy Gap or you will eventually find yourself in Rawlins, which is a nice enough town, but you do not want to go there at this time!

Continue on US HWY 287 for 42 miles to the Sweetwater Station rest area.

Flush toilets available.

Why here? This spot is typical of the Sweetwater River in this area. Smith, Clyman and Fitzpatrick would have passed through this area in the summer of 1824.

Stop 7 – Riverton

(GPS [43.0257, -108.3792](#))

Turn north out of the Sweetwater Station rest area onto HWY 135 toward Riverton, 35.6 miles.

Turn right onto WY 789 and drive 1.4 miles.

Turn right onto E. Fremont Rd.

We will meet at the Riverton City Park, 901 E. Fremont Avenue, Riverton.

Park on the curb on E. Fremont, alongside the park.

Why here? Jedediah Smith spent the winter of 1823/24 with Crow people in their winter encampments along Wind River. The Crow mapped out the route to South Pass for Smith, which most likely included following Wind River downstream to the mouth of the Popo Agee River. Riverton, WY is near where the Popo Agee River empties into the Wind River.

Stop 8 – Dallas Dome Oil Field

(GPS [42.7303, -108.6320](#))

Take WY 789 out of Riverton toward Lander, 25 miles.

Take US 287 south from Lander 8.8 miles, turn left at the intersection with WY 28 to stay on US 287.

Drive 0.8 miles and pull over at the Dallas Dome Oil Field sign. No facilities

Why here? Smith and his group traveled over this country during a period of brutal winter weather. Referencing the south slopes of the Wind River Mountains on the western horizon, traveling upriver along the Popo Agee drainage, and crossing to the Sweetwater River, they struggled to survive. Look west toward the Wind River Mountains and imagine seeing this for the first time, as Smith did, and picking a route. James Clyman's reminiscence makes a reference to surface oil seepage.

Stop 9 – South Pass Rest Area

(GPS [42.3823, -108.8975](#))

Drive back 0.8 miles to the intersection of US 287 and WY28.

Turn left on WY 28 toward Farson.

Follow WY 28 for 32.2 miles to the South Pass rest area. Flush toilets

Why here? This is a good place to gather and use the facilities before driving down the road to the South Pass pullout and historical marker.

Stop 10 – South Pass Pullout

(GPS [42.3302, -108.9731](#))

From the rest area, continue on WY 28 for 5.8 miles, watching for the South Pass historical marker on the left. Take the pullout. No facilities.

Why here? South Pass is broad and James Clyman's reminiscence does not make it clear exactly where Smith and his party passed through. This spot gives a panoramic view of the area.

Stop 11 – Farson

(GPS [42.1092, -109.4485](#))

Continue on WY 28 to where it meets US 191 and stop at the Farson Mercantile.

Follow the crowd to the restaurant and ice cream shop.

Why here? The ice cream.

To Continue to Pinedale:

Turn right on US 191, drive north to arrive in Pinedale in about an hour.

OUTBOUND TOUR

(Scroll up for the inbound tour)

Sunday, September 15, 2024

Meet at Stop 1 at 9:30am

(About 1 hour south of Pinedale)

Stop 1 – Farson

(GPS [42.1092, -109.4485](#) for cell phone or car map app)

Take US 191 south out of Pinedale and drive about an hour to Farson. At the intersection of US 191 and WY 28, turn left and look for the tour group in the parking lot of the Farson Mercantile on the left.

Why here? This is the starting point.

Stop 2 – South Pass Pullout

(GPS [42.3302, -108.9731](#))

From Farson, continue east on WY 28 for 28.9 miles, watching for the South Pass historical marker on the right.

Take the pullout.

This is an easy spot to miss. If you find yourself at the South Pass rest area you have gone 5.8 miles too far. No facilities

Why here? South Pass is broad and James Clyman's reminiscence does not make it clear exactly where Smith and his party passed through. This spot gives a panoramic view of the area.

Stop 3 – South Pass Rest Area

(GPS [42.3823, -108.8975](#))

Head east from the historical marker 5.8 miles. Flush toilets.

Why here? This is a good place to gather and use the facilities before continuing.

Stop 4 – Dallas Dome Oil Field

(GPS [42.7303, -108.6320](#))

From the rest area continue east on WY 28 for 32.2 miles to the intersection of WY

28 and US 287. Turn right on US 287 for 0.8 miles to the Dallas Dome Oil Field sign. No facilities

Why here? Smith and his group traveled over this country during a period of brutal winter weather. Referencing the south slopes of the Wind River Mountains on the western horizon, traveling upriver along the Popo Agee drainage, and crossing to the Sweetwater River, they struggled to survive. Look west toward the Wind River Mountains and imagine seeing this for the first time, as Smith did, and picking a route. James Clyman's reminiscence makes a reference to surface oil seepage.

Stop 5 – Riverton

(GPS [43.0257, -108.3792](#))

Return 0.8 miles to the intersection of US 287 and WY 28 and turn right on US 287 toward Lander, 8.8 miles.

From Lander take WY 789 to Riverton, 25 miles.

Once in Riverton, turn right onto E. Fremont Rd.

We will meet at the Riverton City Park, 901 E. Fremont Avenue, Riverton. Park on the curb on E. Fremont, alongside the park.

Why here? Jedediah Smith spent the winter of 1823/24 with Crow people in their winter encampments along Wind River. The Crow mapped out the route to South Pass for Smith, which most likely included following Wind River downstream to the mouth of the Popo Agee River. Riverton, WY is near where the Popo Agee River empties into the Wind River.

Stop 6 – Sweetwater Station Rest Area

(GPS [42.5444, -108.1885](#))

Drive south out of Riverton on WY 789 for 1.4 miles.

Turn left onto WY 135.

35.6 miles will bring you to Sweetwater Station rest area. Flush toilets

Why here? This spot is typical of the Sweetwater River in this area. Smith, Clyman and Fitzpatrick would have passed through this area in the summer of 1824.

Stop 7 – Devil's Gate overlook

(GPS [42.4372, -107.2176](#))

From the rest area turn left on US 287 toward Jeffery City and Muddy Gap.

Drive 42 miles to Muddy Gap and turn left on WY 220.

Continue on WY 220 for 13.4 miles, past the entrance to the Martin Handcart Museum. The Devil's Gate overlook will be on your left. No facilities

Why here? Devil's Gate is not mentioned in the 1824 primary sources; however, it is worth a quick look to see why this would not be a likely scene for a boat wreck.

Stop 8 – Independence Rock rest area

(GPS [42.4936, -107.1370](#))

Turn left out of the Devil's Gate overlook and follow WY 220 for 5.8 miles.

Turn right into the Independence Rock rest area.

There is a 1.3-mile trail around the rock, and access to the top of the rock from the east side. Flush toilets

Why here? Independence Rock was yet to be named in 1824, but its prominence along the Sweetwater River made it a landmark during Thomas Fitzpatrick's trek to the settlements that summer.

Stop 9 - Bishop Point kiosk

(GPS [42.5016, -106.8948](#))

Turn right out of the rest area onto WY 220 toward Alcova and Casper.

Drive 17.6 miles to the Pathfinder Dam Rd (Road 409). Watch for this sign marking Pathfinder Dam Rd. on the right side of WY 220:

Drive south on Pathfinder Dam Rd.

(Road 409) for 3.5 miles.

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11 - Bessemer Bend National Historic Site

(GPS [42.77039, 106.5306](#))

From the Fremont Canyon overlook, backtrack on Road 408 and Road 409 to WY 220.

Turn right on WY 220 toward Casper.

Drive 22.8 miles.

Near mile marker 106, turn left on Bessemer Bend Rd., Follow this road 2.1 miles to the site. Pit toilets available

Why here? This is the general area where, in 1812, Robert Stuart and his six companions built their first winter quarters during their trek from the Columbia River to St. Louis. Earlier in their trek, Native Americans told Stuart and his group of an easy route across the Rocky Mountains, what became known as South Pass. Stuart used the pass on their way to the settlements, and told of the route when he got back to St. Louis. Because of Robert Stuart, the Jedediah Smith party would have had at least a vague idea of the existence of South Pass.

To continue to Casper:

Backtrack on Bessemer Bend Rd. to WY 220.

Turn left for Casper and I 25.