



KOYOOE TUKADU:  
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

It takes a special kind of person to travel for months into a land that is unknown. Fur trappers were among the first to enter the Paiute homeland. On October 4, 1825, Jedediah Smith set out west with William H. Ashley beyond the Rockies. In the spring of 1827 Smith left California with two men, seven horses, and two mules. The party headed east looking for a way across the Sierra-Nevada Mountain Range. The men took a route that landed them south of Walker Lake and in Paiute Territory. Smith became the first known “white man” to have crossed the Great Basin.

While traveling Smith made note of the Paiute homeland. The men found some water where they met with some natives of the area. Initially Smith thought that the tribe was “the most miserable of human race having nothing to subsist on”, but as he spent more time in the area he learned that couldn’t have been farther from the truth. The party found that the Paiute had knowledge of food, such as hare, that tasted much better than the horse meat the men had become accustomed to eating. Smith began to realize that he misjudged the resources of this land. With more time they came to understand that the Paiutes had an adequate food source that they used wisely. They were well nourished and respected their land so much that they took only what was needed. This way of life came across in their dress, since it was not as elaborate as other tribes that Smith and his men had seen they believed the tribe to be poor. At one point, the men came in contact with a few members of the tribe who graciously shared their antelope meat with these strangers to their land without expectations of anything in return.

By the next spring Smith continued on. The group headed up north on the Oregon Trail where all but two of his men and himself were murdered in the Umpqua Massacre.

Jedediah Smith