

## JOHN BURRIS SMITH

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Following Emily's death, John moved to Douglas County in 1870 and lived on Clark's Branch Creek north of Myrtle Creek for the last 31 years of his life. He died in 1901. Information from *Western Oregon University Library* archives is that he was buried at Myrtle Creek. This writer has personally searched the *Pioneer Cemetery* in Myrtle Creek and has not found his marker. Two other groups, independently, have searched the same cemetery and are convinced that he is not buried there (or else his grave is unmarked.)

It is possible that he is among the Smiths buried at the IOOF Cemetery. There are many without a first name or year of death. His daughter Melissa and her husband Dillard Strode are buried there.

The Smith's had eight daughters and three sons. Cinderella married John C. Harris in 1853 and we find them at Days Creek in the late 1870s. Melissa married Dillard Strode and they were also at Days Creek. He became an elder there. Mary married Thomas J. Harris, probably a brother of John Harris. Another daughter, Fleeta, married John Bartle. Barbara Reyman (Mrs. Rodney) and Grayce Garrison of Reno are descendants of John and Fleeta Bartle.

### Learn More —

A more extended story of John B. Smith is on the Internet at: [NCBible.org/nwh/ProSmithJB.html](http://NCBible.org/nwh/ProSmithJB.html)

Mr. Smith is discussed in *Christians on the Oregon Trail* by Dr. Jerry Rushford, available in many libraries.

## 🌲 PIONEER PREACHERS 🌲

### PAGES FROM OUR PAST — A SERIES

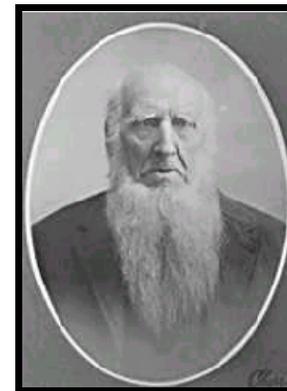
by Charles Dailey

## JOHN BURRIS SMITH

John Burris Smith was among the earliest gospel preachers to bring the message of being “Christians only” to Oregon. While we do not know a great deal about his life, we know enough to give him a place of honor in the development of the church in the Northwest.

J. B. Smith was born in Madison County, Kentucky and migrated to Holt County, Missouri. Without a doubt, he was influenced in his developing years by the preaching of Barton W. Stone and John Mulkey.

He married Emily Thorp in 1840 in Buchanan County, Missouri and joined a wagon train headed for Oregon in the spring of 1846. He was 30 and she was 22. Also in the spring of '46, Lindsay and Jesse Applegate opened the Applegate Trail through Southern Oregon, Nevada and to the south and east. Several members of the Stone-Campbell Movement were in the first emigrant train coming to Oregon by the southern route. Among them



**John Burris Smith.**

Photo courtesy of *Western Oregon University*.

were John and Emily along with their daughters Cinderella, Mary and Melissa.

John was the fourth gospel preacher to enter Oregon Territory. Already preaching here were John Foster and Glen Owen Burnett. Dr. James McBride arrived the same year on the Barlow Road over Mt. Hood. In fact, Glen Owen Burnett, Mac Waller and Dr. McBride frequently preached at the *Jefferson Institute* school house at Rickreall and the Smith's would settle near there.

The men and women that would create Monmouth, Oregon, and build a church and school would not arrive from Monmouth, Illinois for another six years. It is likely that John and Emily attended church at the *Jefferson Institute* school house several miles north of their property, along with Emily's father and sister.

Property was "free" for the earlier settlers and that was a strong motivation for many to hazard the trip from the Midwest. Each married settler was entitled to 640 acres or one square mile. The Smiths took their Donation Land Claim on the north edge of present-day Monmouth.

John and Emily later were among the five Christian families who pooled land resources and provided for the establishment of what today is the city of Monmouth and *Western Oregon University*. The school has had a series of names, but was first known as *Monmouth University*. *Western Oregon University* lists John B. Smith as one of its eleven founders. Ten of those listed were members of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

The Smiths provided 80 acres for the community. The rest of the Smith property remained in his name until following his death.

Most of the clan establishing Monmouth, including Isaac Smith, were related by marriage, but not John Smith. In reviewing the Butler Family Letters<sup>1</sup>, John or Emily are not mentioned by the insiders. We conclude that they were social "outsiders" to the Monmouth clan.

Some researchers believe that John and Isaac were twins, but the evidence is presently insufficient.

In 1853 the Smiths still lived in the Willamette Valley because Mary Preston of Canyonville wrote to the editor of the *Christian Evangelist* in Iowa, ". . . On the 2nd Lord's day in June, Brother Smith from Willamette Valley preached, and immersed 1 lady."

This is the first indication that John Burris Smith had preached outside of Polk County. The Smiths lived in Polk County until Emily's death in the mid-sixties. We know that J. B. Smith was active in preaching in those years because of the following entry in the August 1869 issue of *The Christian Record* (page 367). It states:

Brother John M. Harris, of Oregon, under date of May 20th, reports the result of a good meeting, held by him and Bro. J. B. Smith, on the Coast Fork of the Willamett river, 24 by immersion, 1 from the Baptists, 1 reclaimed, and 3 by letters - in all 29. (The original spelling has been retained.)

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<sup>1</sup> The Butler Family letters may be read online at:  
<http://www.wou.edu/provost/library/archives/butler/butler.htm>