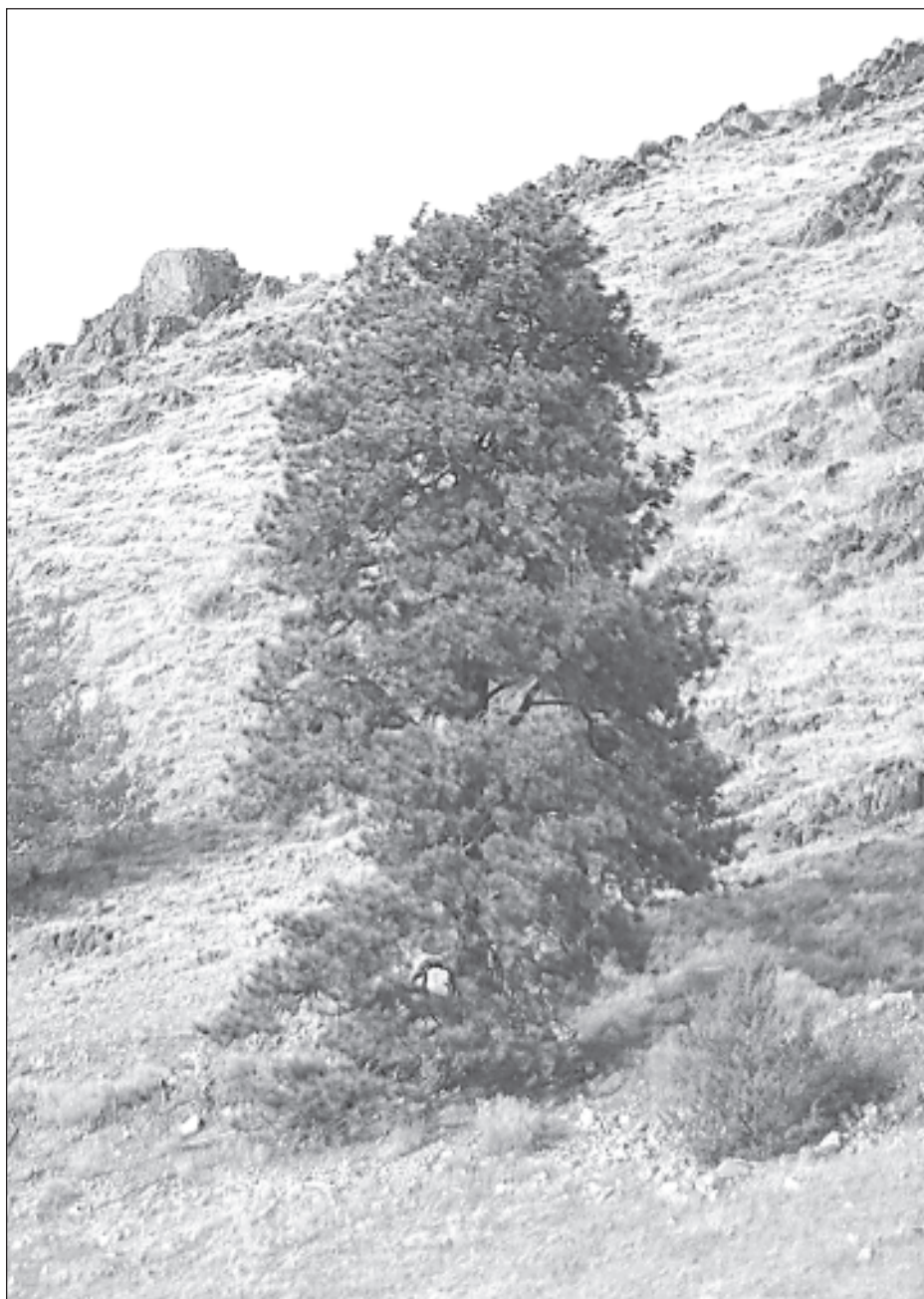


John Jeffrey in the Wild West: Speculations on his Life and Times (1828-1854?)

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(Adapted from an essay that will appear in *Plant Hunters of the Pacific Northwest*, edited by A.R. Kruckeberg and R. M. Love)



Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) in the Shasta Valley near the Oregon to California Trail, Siskiyou County, California. Photo by Frank Lang.

Among plant hunters of the Northwest, John Jeffrey was like a shooting star, a quick twinkle soon extinguished. In 1850, Jeffrey was selected by a group of Scottish botanists and horticulturalists to seek new and unusual species overlooked by David Douglas and Archibald Menzies decades earlier. Among his best-known discoveries are Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*), tall mountain shooting-star (*Dodecatheon jeffreyi*) and foxtail pine (*Pinus balfouriana*). However, with a few exceptions, botanical treasures were few and far between, and his collecting efforts disappointed his sponsors. Then he disappeared. He was last seen in San Francisco in 1854; no one knows what happened to him.

Of David Douglas's travels in North America, we know where he was, what he did, when he did it, and who his companions were. We know all this because Douglas carefully documented his activities in a detailed diary, sent letters home, and wrote and reflected on his adventures on his return to Britain. Of John Jeffrey's travels, we know much less. Jeffrey's diary, required as a condition of his employment, has never been found, if it were ever kept. What we know of his time in North America is pieced together from the accounts of others who met and dealt with him and from the few letters and specimens that reached Scotland. His itinerary has been reconstructed from Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) records and by noting when and where his specimens were collected (after accounting for conflicting and incomplete dates). Numerous accounts of Jeffrey's life, death, and

travels in western North America have been written (see sidebar). For this biography, I relied on these sources, particularly Johnstone (1939), but also examined archival materials on two brief visits to Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (RBGE). [Correspondence from RBGE will not be cited in the bibliography, but indicated in the text by (RBGE).] Access to the mostly handwritten correspondence relating to Jeffrey and the Oregon Association greatly improved sometime between 1894 and 1917 (L. Patterson, pers. comm.) when Isaac Bayley Balfour likely had the correspondence transcribed from hand to typewritten form in preparation for Balfour's hope "to be able to publish as full as story as it is now possible to give of this Oregon Expedition (Letter to J. Douglas)." Regrettably, Balfour's account was never published.

In this biography, I speculate on Jeffrey's performance and fate, based on materials and observations not previously presented, and offer tentative evidence that may answer some of the questions raised by other authors. Why was his performance so uneven? How did his sponsors react to his performance? What might have happened to Jeffrey, contrary to existing stories about his disappearance? Was he really in San Francisco more than once and then only for a day?

The Oregon Association: Searching for horticultural "gold" in the New World



John Hutton (Woody Fibre) Balfour about 1855, a year after the disappearance of John Jeffrey. An original force in organizing the Oregon Expedition. Portrait courtesy of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

primarily for new conifers and send their seeds back to Scotland. Professor John Hutton Balfour, professor of botany, Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, the founder of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh and Queen's Botanist for Scotland, chaired the meeting. At that meeting Balfour ("Woody Fibre," as he was known to generations of Edinburgh botany students) indicated that he had someone in mind who could do the job of following in David Douglas' footsteps. Those present decided to proceed with the enterprise.

On 30 January 1850 a committee of 13 was appointed that included James McNab, Andrew Murray, as a joint Secretary, George Patton, and Professor Balfour as Chairman. Andrew

The accounts by David Douglas and other travelers of the magnificent western North American conifers led George Patton to believe that it would be possible to raise funds to send a collector to explore the region more fully. At the behest of George Patton (Lord Glenalmond), a meeting of "gentlemen interested in the promotion of Arboriculture and Horticulture" was held at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, 22 November 1849. The purpose of the meeting was to consider mounting an expedition to the American Pacific Northwest to search

Jeffrey's Biographers

Edward Ravenscroft (1884) offers one of the first published accounts of Jeffrey in North America in his treatise on pines cultivated in Great Britain. After a brief synopsis of Jeffrey's collections and accomplishments, Ravenscroft states, "what became of Jeffrey afterwards is not known." Ravenscroft's account seems based on available information from correspondence at RBGE and Hudson's Bay Company accounts and offers little not reported from other, later sources.

Frederick V. Coville's (1897) early account of Jeffrey's collecting trip to North America compiled an itinerary based on eleven circulars sent to the subscribers of the Oregon Botanical Association who financed the expedition.

Isaac Bayley Balfour, the Regis Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) from 1888 to 1922, wrote a letter (RBGE) to Robert Douglas, Secretary of the Geographic Board Canada from 1916 to 1930, summarizing Jeffrey's itinerary in North America. Isaac Bayley was the son of John Hutton Balfour, founder of the Edinburgh Botanical Society and a principle in the group who sent Jeffrey to North America.

James Todd Johnstone, Librarian at RBGE, summarized most of what is known about John Jeffrey and his botanical work in North America and the Oregon Botanical Association of Scottish and British horticulturists and botanists who sent him off on the Oregon Expedition (Johnstone 1939). Johnstone had access to the documents of the Association and most of Jeffrey's surviving specimens. The documents and specimens are at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. His paper includes an extensive plant list. In identifying the plants Johnstone consulted several western North American botanical authorities of the time: Professor John Davidson of the University of British Columbia, Mr. Lincoln Savage of southern Oregon and Professor Albert Sweetser of the University of Oregon. The list reflects the botanical nomenclature in use at the time of Johnstone's compilation in 1939.

A. G. Harvey (1946) adds little new to what we know of Jeffrey's journey, but he does point out the magnitude of Jeffrey's contributions to our knowledge of the western North American flora. Erwin F. Lange (1967) reiterates much of the previous work but adds some detail from letters and circulars of the Association. P. and J. Woods (2003) discuss Jeffrey's conifer contributions to horticulture. They provide background information on Jeffrey and the Oregon Association, the contents of the boxes sent back by Jeffrey, and general reflections on the expedition. Ann Lindsay's (2005) discussion offers considerable insight into the environment of Jeffrey's youth in rural Scotland and offers a readable standard account of Jeffrey in North America.

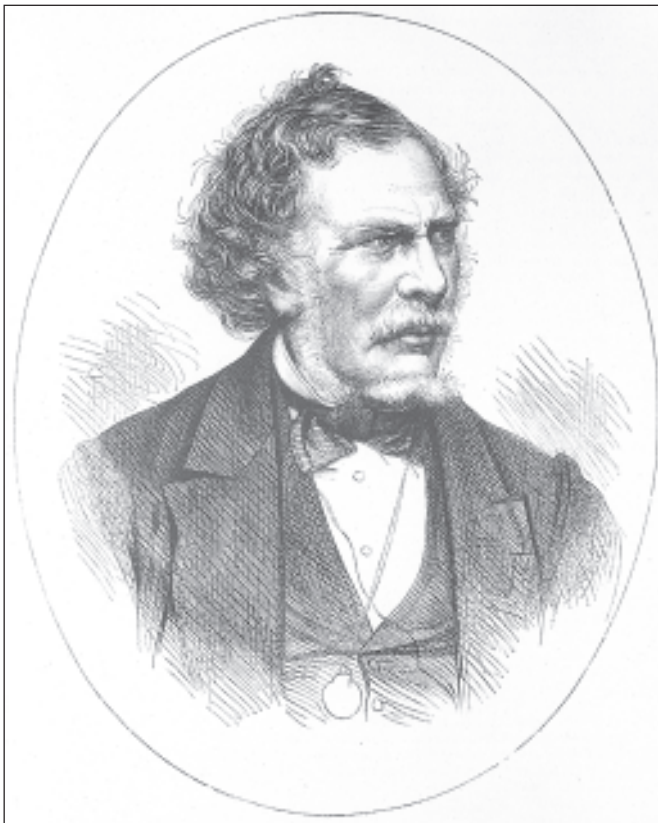
Murray (1812-1878) was an entomologist with strong interests in horticulture and botany. William Murray, Andrew's brother, was in San Francisco in 1854. As you will see, the brothers exchanged interesting correspondence concerning Jeffrey's stay in the city by the bay.

Jeffrey's appointment as collector

In February, the committee advertised for subscribers who bought shares in the expedition that entitled them to a proportion of the seeds and plant materials that made it back to Great Britain alive. At this time, the committee discussed the qualifications of the collector. On the recommendation of Balfour, McNab, and Dr. Neill, the assembled empowered McNab to inform Jeffrey that he was chosen as collector.

At the request of the Association, the Hudson's Bay Company generously offered to provide passage on one of their ships from Britain to their post at York Factory on the western shore of Hudson's Bay. The Company would guide the plant collector to their outposts on the Pacific, supply all needs, and advance him money to the amount granted by the Association should he go beyond their territory. The Association arranged for the 24-year-old Jeffrey to learn how to take measurements of longitude, latitude, and altitude and purchased an outfit of clothes and the proper instruments.

At the 22 May 1850 meeting of the Association Jeffrey was given a list of 32 complete instructions for his trip. He was to



James McNab, Head Gardener at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, was instrumental in selecting Jeffrey as the Oregon Expedition botanist. Engraving courtesy of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the Gardener's Chronicle (1878).

The Oregon Association Expedition to Western North America

A cast of major characters:

THE OREGON ASSOCIATION: a group of eminent, influential Britons interested in send a handpicked collector to bring back plants just for Scottish landowners (Lindsay 2005).

John Jeffrey, the chosen collector, a twenty-something Scot from Clunie, Perthshire, Scotland.

James McNab, Principle Gardener, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Association Co-secretary, responsible for Jeffrey's selection

George Patton (Lord Glenalmond), the expedition was his idea

John Hutton Balfour, Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Oregon Association Chairman, his son,

Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, succeeded his father as Regis Keeper of RBGE, and carefully looked after Oregon Expedition matters for years afterwards.

Andrew Murray, entomologist, Association Co-secretary
William Murray, brother of Andrew in San Francisco at the expedition's end

W. Gibson Craig, Association member upset by financial arrangements

William Evans, Association member who reports Jeffrey in Sacramento in 1852

HUDSON BAY COMPANY personnel acquainted with Jeffrey

James Hector, a Jeffrey character reference, who had never meet him.

Alexander Caulfield Anderson, accompanied Jeffrey from Fort Colville to Fort Victoria.

James R. Anderson, young son of A. C. Anderson, who spent time with Jeffrey as a boy at Fort Victoria.

Peter Skeene Ogden, long time HBC employee, reported Jeffrey in Crescent City, CA.

James Douglas, Factor at Fort Victoria

John Ballenden, Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, travel companion of Jeffrey and host the winter of 1852-53.

Dr. William Tolmie Fraser, Chief Factor, Fort Nisqually

EXPRESS COMPANIES

Adams & Company - San Diego: a subsidiary, Adams Express Company, was organized in 1850, failed in 1854. Shipped some of Jeffrey's packages to Scotland.

McKinlay, Garroich & Co: San Francisco shipping and mercantile company that handled the transport of Jeffrey's goods to San Diego.

Page, Bacon & Co: San Francisco Bank that may have cashed Jeffrey's draft.

keep a daybook of his activities in duplicate. Jeffrey was to keep one copy; the other copy was to be sent back to Scotland at each opportunity. Item 13 gave Jeffrey considerable liberty as to where he could go based on local circumstances: "They leave you broad discretion and power to follow that course which you may consider the most likely to forward the objects of the expedition." Other instructions emphasized keeping the committee informed of his activities.

Balfour arranged with the Hudson's Bay Company to advance Jeffrey funds to carry out his mission. Whatever the arrangements were, Balfour and the Association came to regret them later. Apparently, Hudson's Bay Company was not given a limit as to the amount of money that could be given to Jeffrey. Jeffrey stated he was quite satisfied with the arrangements Balfour made for money matters.

Jeffrey should have been satisfied. W. Gibson Craig, in a letter to the Committee Treasurer dated 8 June 1850, expressed his amazement that the committee sent Jeffrey off to "the remotest and most inaccessible parts of the world, without making any arrangement whatever how he was to be supplied with money is the most extraordinary proceeding I have ever heard of." Because of this, Jeffrey had no limits as to the amount the Hudson's Bay Company could advance him or for what purpose. In a postscript to Craig's letter of 7 November 1850 he writes "Jeffrey himself has not the slightest idea what Funds are to be at his disposal, or what expenses he may properly incur. This is entirely omitted in his instructions, and the Committee should give him generally their views on the subject." As far as I can determine, Jeffrey was able to obtain funds from the Hudson's Bay Company and others without constraint.

On 20 March 1850, the Minute Book of the Association recorded that an offer by the Colonial Life Assurance Company to insure Jeffrey's life was laid before the meeting and the offer was accepted. On 22 March 1850, the Association paid three pounds ten shillings and eight pence to insure the life of Jeffrey for £400. The policy expired 13 March 1854 without a claim being made upon it. (Kate Hutcheson, Standard Life Assurance Company, pers. comm. 1998).

Tracking John Jeffrey's travels in North America

Johnstone's 1939 treatment listed Jeffrey's collections in alphabetical order by family, arranged in the order of Bentham and Hooker's Genera Plantarum. Many of the collections are numbered with gaps in the sequence that Johnstone attributes to specimens that Jeffrey collected and shipped, but did not arrive in Scotland, or were otherwise lost. Other specimens were unnumbered, "Sine no.," in Johnstone's list. Some of these, according to Johnstone, were "no doubt" those sent home with his books and instruments in 1854. When I entered Johnstone's list

in a spreadsheet and sorted by date, a revealing pattern emerged that grouped the species collected at each locality, and helped clarify Jeffrey's itinerary.

Conflicting and incomplete dates make an accurate accounting of his travels difficult, as well as collecting dates that seem improbable in terms of time and distance. For example, his collections of 2 July 1853 are from the Coast Mountains and the Sierra Nevada on the same day. Possibilities include: 1) report is correct and travel time was much faster than I imagine; 2) Jeffrey (or someone else) made an error in recording dates; 3) data are correct because Jeffrey had others help him by collecting at different locations (There is no direct evidence for the latter, but it is a possibility); finally, 4) Jeffrey was near the northern end of the Sacramento Valley and his "Sierra Nevada collections" were from the southern reaches on the Cascades toward Mount Lassen.

Other problems include incomplete dates. His collections from



Foxtail pine type specimen collected by John Jeffrey near Mt. Shasta in 1852. Courtesy Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

“Shasta Butte,” (present-day Mt. Shasta) bearing only the year 1852 were undoubtedly collected when he was in Siskiyou County in the fall of 1852. A greater mystery is the suite of specimens that are simply labeled “Oregon 1852-1853,” discussed further below. A more complete picture of his comings and goings in the area might have been possible with complete collection information.

York Factory to Fort Victoria (12 August 1850 - October 1851) Johnstone (1939) and other authors give a complete accounting of his travels as far as could be assessed. Jeffrey arrived at York Factory on 12 August 1850 and left on 23 August, traveling across Canada and eventually reaching Edmonton House where he stayed until March 1851. Then he went on to Jasper House where he remained until the end of April when he proceeded to Fort Colville. From there, he collected in the Okanogan and returned to Fort Colville. His trail of collections indicate that he eventually made his way to Vancouver Island, then went back to the mainland: the Fraser River, Mount Baker, and places in between.

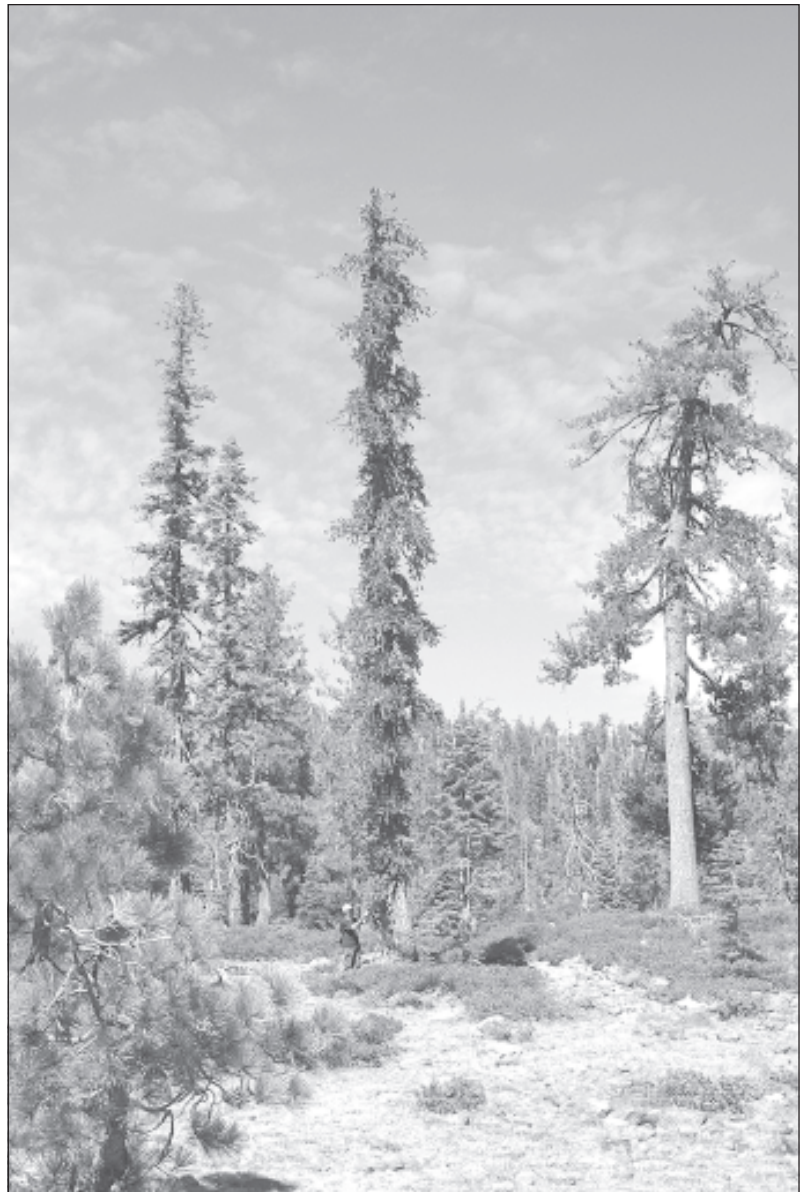
Fort Victoria (October 1851 - May 1852). Jeffrey spent the winter of 1851-52 at Fort Victoria and environs. During that winter, he sailed on the HBC’s *Beaver* to Fort Rupert on the northern end of Vancouver Island. Winter and spring, he collected twice in the San Juan Islands. While at Fort Victoria, Jeffrey became friendly with John Ballenden, who, in other correspondence, spoke most highly of Jeffrey and explained his account of Jeffrey’s mysterious end.

The first trip south

Fort Nisqually (May - June 18, 1852). Jeffrey traveled south to Fort Vancouver via Puget Sound and Fort Nisqually. On 21 May, James Douglas, Factor at Fort Victoria, wrote to Dr. William Fraser Tolmie, Factor at Fort Nisqually, telling him Mr. Jephreys, Esq’re [*sic*] was proceeding on “his professional pursuits to Fort Vancouver” and would visit Fort Nisqually on his way “thither.” Tolmie was authorized to furnish any supplies and information Jeffrey may require to help him on his journey to Fort Vancouver. Apparently, Jeffrey carried this letter with him, based on Douglas’ opening sentence: “I forward this communication by John Jephreys [*sic*]”

On June 15, the Fort Nisqually Journal of Occurrences (Dickey 1993) reports that Ballenden arrived at Fort Nisqually from Fort Victoria late in the evening. On the 18th the journal reports, “This morning Dr. Tolmie accompanied by Mr. Ballenden and Mr. Jeffreys [*sic*] started for Vancouver.”

Fort Vancouver (June 18-20). Jeffrey’s time at Fort Vancouver was brief, just long enough to prepare to leave. He left Fort Vancouver on 20 June 1852 traveling by land to California via the Willamette Valley, Oregon City and the Umpqua Country.



Foxtail pine near Bull Lake west of China Mountain, Siskiyou County, California. Photo by Frank Lang.

Wm. W. Evans (28 January 1853) letter to Andrew Murray or John Balfour quoted a letter from a Mr. Charles’ son (23 July 1852) that might shed some light on Jeffrey’s travel plans. “Almost the first person I saw there [Ft. Vancouver] was Mr Jeffrey [*sic*] the botanist who was staying for about three weeks at this place; he has been at Vancouver’s Island and other posts of the Company’s and started from here three days ago, going on horseback by Oregon City up the country to California. It is his intention to return home by Mexico if he can manage it.” Mr. Charles’ son suggested trying to contact John Ballenden, the Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, for more information about Jeffrey.

Willamette Valley, Cascade Mountains and Umpqua Valley (July 1-August 29). His next collection, on 1 July 1852, was labeled “Willamette.” On 4 July, he collected in the Cascade Mountains and in the Willamette Valley. Jeffrey made 13 collections in the Umpqua Valley and the Cascade Range, although there was one

collection on 26 July from the Willamette Valley. In the Cascades, he found *Arctostaphylos nevadensis* at 7,000 ft. near the snow line at 43° North Latitude.

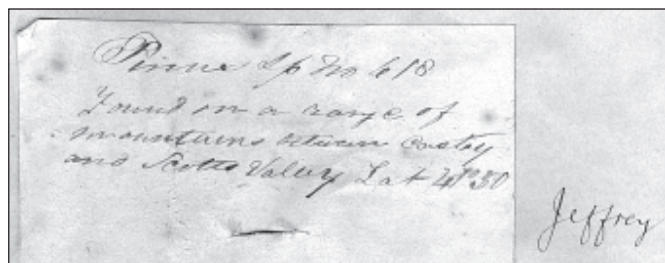
Northern California, Shasta Valley, and Shasta Butte (September 3-October 29, 1852). Jeffrey's time in the vicinity of Mount Shasta (his Shasta Butte) in present-day Siskiyou County, California, was perhaps his most fruitful time in North America. He collected 32 species from various locations, including the type specimens for *Pinus balfouriana*, Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*), Sierra lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta* var. *murrayana*), and the alpine eriogonum (*Eriogonum pyrolaefolium*) sometimes referred to as the hairy Shasta wild buckwheat (*E. p. var. coryphaeum*).

On 11 September, Jeffrey reported ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) [no specimen seen, seeds received, Johnstone 1939] from the Rose River Valley which is probably an old name for the Little Shasta River in Siskiyou County. While in Siskiyou County he collected knobcone pine (*Pinus attenuata*) in Salmon River Mountains and western white pine (*Pinus monticola*) in the Trinity Mountains, making only one collection at each place. Not a good use of time, considering the distance traveled. His last collection was incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) on 29 October 1852 along the "Scott River on dry sandy soil." There were no more collections until December 1852.

Return to Fort Vancouver (October 1852- April 1853). Jeffrey rejoined John Ballenden at Fort Vancouver on or about the 3rd of December 1852 and remained with him until he (Ballenden) left for Britain, 24 March 1853 (RBGE). On 4 December 1852, Jeffrey was on Mt Jefferson where he collected lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*). Other authors assumed that between 29 October and 3 December Jeffrey slowly worked his way north from the Scott River to Fort Vancouver to spend the winter as guest of the HBC. As explained below, during November he was more likely far south of there, in the gold fields of California: Sacramento and San Francisco.

Jeffrey might have spent the winter working on his specimens in preparation for shipment back to Britain. He did not seem to have spent time collecting. And, it does not mean that Jeffrey spent all his time at Fort Vancouver.

Jeffrey wrote a short note to Balfour on 15 February 1853 from Columbia City concerning the shipping arrangements for Box 6 (via Panama and the Adams & Co. express) and field notes for the *Pinus* collection at Mt. Jefferson on 4 December 1853. (In 1853, Columbia City was briefly the name of the Oregon Territory post office near Fort Vancouver (Payne 1959) on the Washington side of the Columbia River.)



Label from the type specimen foxtail pine, *Pinus balfouriana*, named for John Hutton Balfour, founder of the Edinburgh Botanical Society and a principle in the group who sent Jeffrey to North America. (RBGE photo)

On 14 March 1853, Jeffrey wrote to Balfour from Oregon City "en route for the Rocky Mountains." After discussing the shipping route for several of the packages he was dispatching back to Britain, he wrote, "At present I am on the eve of starting for the Rocky Mountains by way of the south side of the Columbia River, on reaching the Mountain I will turn south and make for San Francisco." Apparently, he delayed his departure, because according to HBC records at Ft. Vancouver (RBGE), Jeffrey was paid \$500 on 6 April 1853. It is thought that Jeffrey left this day or shortly after to journey south.

The final trip south

Fort Vancouver to San Francisco (April -October 1853). Jeffrey apparently took his time moving through the Willamette Valley without collecting. His first collections on the way south were in the Umpqua Valley starting 24 April 1853. He collected 55 different species between the 24 April and 3 May 1853. He was in the Rogue Valley collecting on 15 May 1853 (5 species) and in the Siskiyou Mountains on 23 May (12 species).

On 10 June he collected three members of the lily family at "Shasta" (Mount or Valley not stated). The next day, 11 June, at Clear Creek he made several collections including what is now known as the Azure penstemon (*Penstemon jeffreyanus* [*P. azureus*]) and Bolander's lily (*Lilium bolanderi*) in the Scott Mountains. This Clear Creek is most likely the tributary of McAdam Creek near Fort Jones in Scott Valley since he collected in the Scott Mountains the same day. This was very near the then-thriving town of Deadwood (Henryx and others 2003).

Seven days later on 18 June he collected chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) on Scott Mountain. From 26 June until 27 July 1853, an itinerary based on his collections becomes confused. On 1 July, he collected trumpet gooseberry (*Ribes leptanthum*) in the Coast Range. This must be a misidentification by Johnstone (1939) because The Jepson Manual does not record this plant from California. On 2 July, he collected rockfringe (*Epilobium obcordatum*) and western rhododendron (*Rhododendron californicum* [*R. macrophyllum*]) in the Coast Range and waxy-leaved (*Ceanothus foliosus*) and (*Styrax californicum* [*S. redivivus*]) in the Sierra Nevada. Chances are, he was far enough north to have been in the Cascade/Sierra Mountain interface. On 12 July, he was in the Sierra Nevada Mountains where he collected a single specimen, *Spiraea densiflora*. On 20 July, he collected *Polemonium carneum* on the Applegate River in southern Oregon, the 26th and 27th he collected *Calochortus venustus* and *Lilium bolanderi* in the California Coast Ranges.

By 1 August 1853, he was collecting near the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and on the east flank of that range until the 8th. On 10 August, he collected *Hibiscus incanus* in the Sacramento Valley. His collection of western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*) on the south Umpqua on 11 August must be in error. There is no record of his activities until 3 September 1853 when he spent most of September until the 1st of October in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We know that Jeffrey got as far south as Walker Pass in Kern County based on his collection there of lodgepole pine on 20 September 1853. On 1 October he collected what turned out to be the type specimen of *Cupressus macnabiana*, McNab Cypress, named in honor of James (with an *-iana* ending).

John Jeffrey in San Francisco

Jeffrey apparently arrived in San Francisco in early October 1853, as he drew a bill on the Association for £200 on 7 October 1853 (Johnstone 1939). Balfour (RBGE) in a letter to R. Douglas reports Jeffrey in the Sierra Nevada until 1 October 1853, at Rio Americana [American River]. Johnstone (1939) reported that Jeffrey collected as late as 20 November 1853 on the Bay of San Francisco, although there seems to be no record of this collection in Johnstone's plant list.

There is the possibility that Jeffrey was in San Francisco three times: first, for a day, as reported by Ballenden (RBGE); a second time in November 1852, and a third time after his last trip south between April and October 1853. Some authors (F.V. Coville, 3 December 1919 letter to R. Douglas) consider the possibility of a one-day stay as unlikely. However, two possibilities speak to his presence in San Francisco prior to his final arrival in 1853.

First, his box Number 3 was mailed from San Francisco some time in 1852. The Oregon Association committee opened the box on 24 August 1852. Correspondence at RBGE between Balfour and the General Post Office is dated 23 August 1852 indicating that the box was posted earlier that year. Unfortunately, the exact mailing date is unknown. How could this have happened?

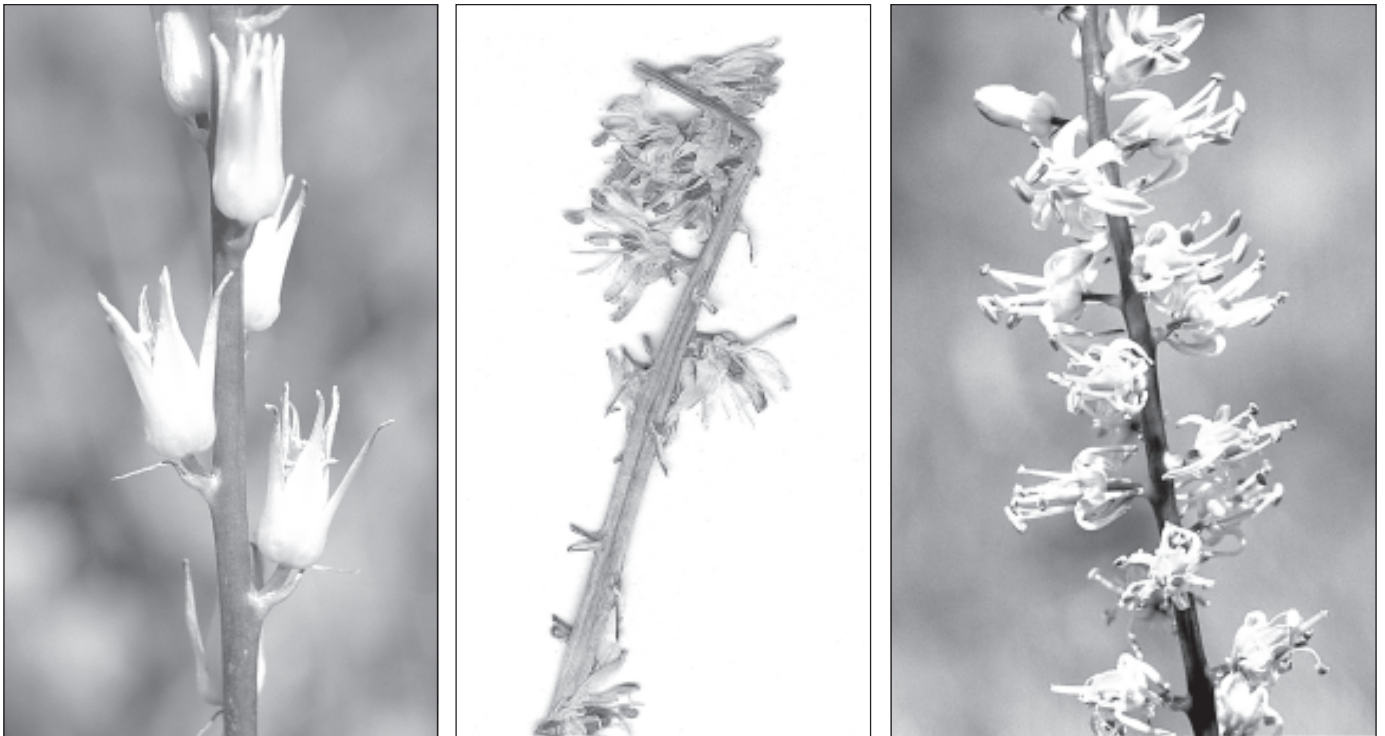
Peter Skene Ogden, Chief Factor of the HBC reported Jeffrey's presence in Crescent City in a letter to Andrew Murray 7 December 1853. Ogden wrote, "The last accounts we [HBC] had of him was from Crescent City a town on the coast to the South of the Umpqua River." According to Ogden, the Company had supplied Jeffrey with \$500. (Jeffrey was probably paid in dollars or pound sterling depending the HBC facility was in British or US territory.)

If you assume that he had to have traveled by land then the possibility of a one-day stay seems remote. However, Jeffrey could have easily reached San Francisco by ship from Crescent City. If John Jeffrey were in San Francisco for a day, he might have got there via ship from Crescent City. In 1846, John Work wrote to his friend Edward Ermatinger that "A line of mail steamers is to commence running next spring from Panama to the Columbia River, touching at the intervening points along the coast and to carry the US Government mail monthly from New York to the Columbia."

What route could he have taken? One possibility is trail from the Rogue River Valley, through the Illinois Valley down the Smith River to Crescent City. Is there any evidence that he traveled that way? Among Jeffrey's collections, there is a suite of specimens (Johnstone 1939) simply labeled "Oregon Plants 1852-53." When I first sorted Johnstone's list I was positive that Jeffrey had been in the Illinois Valley. Among the plants Johnstone listed were *Darlingtonia californica*, *Polygala cornuta* (*P. californica*), *Rhamnus californica*, *Viola lobata*, and especially *Schoenolirion bracteosum*, now known as *Hastingsia bracteosa*.

Hastingsia bracteosa is known only from Darlingtonia fens in the Illinois Valley of southwestern Oregon. The plant was identified, incorrectly (as its synonym *Schoenolirion bracteosum*), about the time of Johnstone's work in 1939. The plant is *H. alba* s.l. (or its segregate *H. serpenticicola* Becking), a much more widespread taxon as seen by its recurved perianth parts and exposed stamens. Tracing unknown itineraries using the collection of narrow endemics is a good approach when it works. Unfortunately, it offers no help in the case of Jeffrey's travels.

Another possibility is when he finished collecting in northern California and his return to Fort Vancouver in 1852. Wm W.



Comparison of *Hastingsia* species. Left, *H. bracteosa*, Josephine County, Oregon (Lang photo); Center, Jeffrey's collection, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE photo); Right, *H. alba*, Jackson County, Oregon. (Lang photo). Jeffrey's collection appears to be *H. alba*.

Evans, subscribing member of the Oregon Association, wrote Andrew Murray a letter (31 January 1853) quoting from a letter from the son of his acquaintance (Mr. Charles) dated 3 December 1852. The son wrote, "Jeffrey, the Botanist has just returned from California, he left Sacramento two days before it burned." Much of the business district was burned in the "great" Sacramento fire of 2 November 1852. If true, then Jeffrey did head south in 1852 and could have easily reached San Francisco from Sacramento by boat. A number of different cruise lines had daily or weekly steamer service between Sacramento and San Francisco as indicated by ads in the Daily Alta California of the time.

Various people in San Francisco were acquainted with Jeffrey, including shipping agents at McKinlay, Garroich & Company who sent his goods to points south (Fort Yuma, San Diego) and the "young Scotchman" mentioned in William Murray's letter below.

The West that Jeffrey found

Jeffrey's 1850 Pacific Northwest was considerably different from that of David Douglas. Political issues concerning sovereignty over the area were settled with the British giving up all claims south of the 49th Parallel in 1846. In 1850, the Donation Land Act greatly accelerated settlement of the Oregon Territory. Though Jeffrey traveled with the help of the HBC, its influence over the region was not as great as it was in Douglas' time. Routes of travel were more firmly established between small European communities; settlements and settlers dotted the landscape. The route to California and its gold fields discovered in 1848, and though no freeway by any means, was now well used by settlers from the Willamette headed south to seek their fortunes. The 1850 census revealed that most of the European settlements were in the northern Willamette Valley. Settlements also appeared near Elkton and Roseburg in the Umpqua country. In southern Oregon, the communities of Ashland Mills (now Ashland) and Jacksonville were established in 1852. Shasta Butte City, now Yreka, California was a booming goldrush town in 1852 (Wells 1881) after gold was discovered in March 1851. Redick McKee, US Indian Agent at the time, wrote that the place had 300 homes, 1000 souls, and a town with plenty of provisions (Hendryx *et al.* 2003). Board was three dollars a day, without bed, and a dollar for horses and mules. Restaurants were San Francisco style, and "in the evenings music invited the lovers of liquor and Monte."

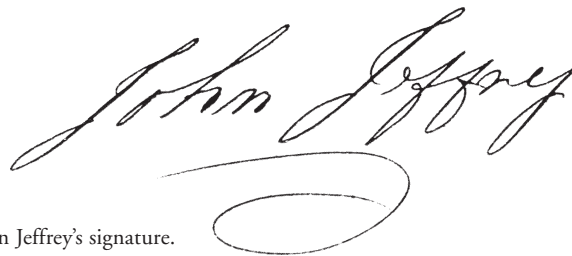
Spirits and similar beverages were apparently widely available throughout the region. For example, the Journal of Occurrences at Fort Nisqually for May 1852 reports on the 3rd, "Barnes away drinking," and on the 10th, "The plain Englishmen are reported to be drinking at Sastac."

The discovery of gold in southern Oregon at Jacksonville and Sailor Diggings in the Illinois Valley and in northern California in the Scott and Shasta Valleys brought thousands of miners and entrepreneurs. Crescent City became a boomtown in 1853. Goods and passengers moved with frequency between Crescent City, San Francisco, and Portland by sail and steamship. The trip from San Francisco was only a few relatively comfortable days. From Crescent City to the Illinois Valley, there was a constant stream of pack trains carrying supplies and people to and fro in the course of several days to the gold fields. Hundreds of pack animals moved along the trail each week, bearing staples such as bacon, hams,

flour, coffee, sugar, blankets, nails, shovels, and many kegs of whiskey, in addition to passengers.

The real John Jeffrey: Expert hardy traveler or incompetent do-nothing?

There is no picture of John Jeffrey in any form. This is in contrast to the sketches and portraits of David Douglas, who returned to England to make something of himself. Fame required pictures. Jeffrey did not return to Scotland and did not become famous during his lifetime. The most personal "picture" I can offer of Jeffrey is his signature (Fig. 3) taken from one of his letters to Andrew Murray (7 June 1850).



John Jeffrey's signature.

There are several accounts of Jeffrey's adult character. Ft. Vancouver Chief Factor Ballenden may have known Jeffrey as well as anyone in North America. On 1 February 1854 Ballenden wrote Andrew Murray, "So far as I saw no person could be more painstaking or indefatigable and notwithstanding what appears to me now inexplicable, I feel perfectly confident he will give full satisfaction to his employers." Jeffrey's shipping company, McKinlay & Garrioch, found him a "hardworking, enthusiastic, very steady and temperate man," as William Murray reported to brother Andrew (19 May 1854). Johnstone (1939) wrote that a Jas. [James] Hector wrote to J. H. Balfour (5 January 1858) that "All who saw him say he proved a most expert and hardy traveler." This statement is based on "a gathering of gentlemen" together for the settling of New Year's Day accounts at Fort Edmonton. Hector simply reported the response of those present as to their recollection of Jeffrey. Hector had no first hand knowledge of Jeffrey, and his account of the HBC gathering may have been the basis of Ravenscroft's (1884) statement that the Company was anxious to secure his [Jeffrey's] services and that they [HBC] "took some trouble to find him out for that purpose, but with out success."

But then, there is another quote from Wm. Murray's letter (shown in full below) to his brother. Jeffrey apparently complained to his shipping agent, "he could do nothing on Vancouver Island on account of the brush-wood which is so thick as to be impenetrable except by cutting your way axe in hand, information which I quietly put into our own pipe for our private smoking."

The appraisal of Jeffrey's character is not consistent, but the explanation could be the easy availability of alcoholic beverages. On 1 July, three days before sailing for Hudson's Bay, Jeffrey penned a letter to Professor Balfour that might explain Jeffrey's lackluster performance as a plant collector. The letter is remarkable, not so much for its chatty contents, but for the gradual decay of handwriting from a clear crisp hand on page one to a loose sloppy, ink-blotted hand on page six. What could account

for this? Not seasickness; he writes of a boisterous 9-day passage from Gravesend that left his fellow passengers sick, but not he. "I flatter myself that I am a good sailor." Seasickness apparently would not be a cause of his deteriorating handwriting. Another possibility is rum.

Jeffrey apparently had an active social life in the Orkneys. The locals looked forward to the arrival of the Northwest Ship, "...so that the whole country turns out and comes to see the Captain and the Ship." They "never failed" to invite him along with the Captain to see them. "I sometimes went," wrote Jeffrey.

When his itinerary in the Shasta Valley, organized by date, showing days without collection or apparent work, a modern reader, when asked, "What do you think?" said, "Drunkard."

Jeffrey's exploration: Success or failure?

There is little question that Jeffrey's time in North America was both a success and a failure. This has been clearly pointed out by others, especially Woods and Woods (2003) and Harvey (1946), as well as Andrew Murray's 1860 judgment (Johnstone 1939) that it wasn't until the third year of his contact that "they [subscribers] had just reason to be dissatisfied with his conduct," and that it was "unjust so to term it [a failure]." Murray further wrote, "his collections do him no discredit, even when compared to theirs [Menzies and Douglas, earlier plant explorers in the region]." Jeffrey's collection of 119 species of seeds (Coates 1969) and over 400 plant specimens (Lange 1967) is some measure of his success.

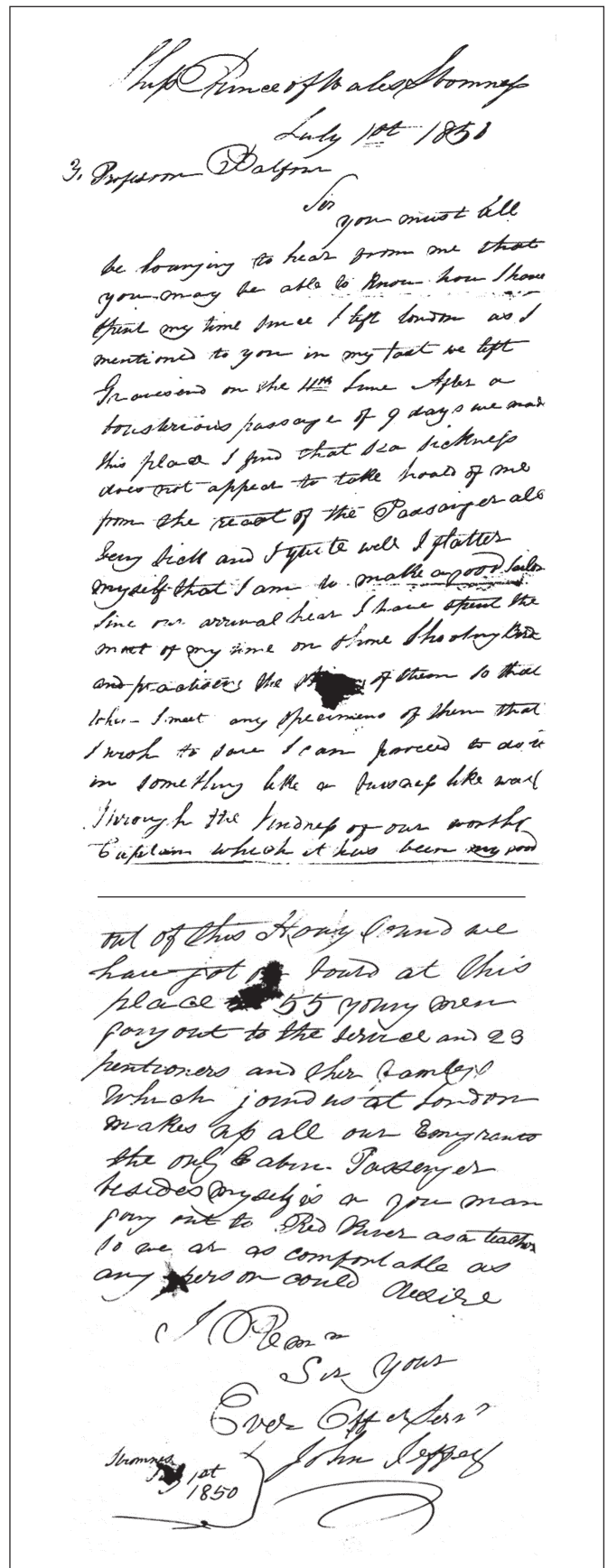
To be fair to Jeffrey, four of ten boxes and packages of specimens and seeds, which he said in letters had been sent, did not arrive in Scotland (Lange 1967). Perhaps, if we knew of the contents, his travels would be better known and periods of time, (days, weeks, even months), when he appeared to be idle, he might have been busy. The lost boxes might even have contained his missing journal.

Accounts of Jeffrey's demise

Several versions exist regarding Jeffrey's fate. No corroborating evidence exists for any of them: no newspaper accounts, obituaries, reports, or body are known that establishes date or manner of Jeffrey's death.

James McNab (1873) wrote concerning the death of Jeffrey: "authentic particulars never reached this country. It appears that he was killed trading with Indians." The basis for this assertion is not given.

Frederick V. Coville (1897) came to the conclusion that Jeffrey "...perished of thirst on the Colorado Desert." He based this on a comment in a letter from William Murray in San Francisco to his brother Andrew in Edinburgh. Professor Isaac Bayley Balfour, son of "Old Fibre" Balfour, was Keeper at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh from 1887 to 1922. He forbid full publication by Coville of the William Murray letter, perhaps to protect the reputation of the Garden or the brothers, though both were dead by 1897. William died in 1878, Andrew in 1887. Coville quotes only the part of the letter that deals with McKinlay, Garroich & Co. responsible for the shipment of Jeffrey's goods. The Company deciphered Jeffrey's address to Fort Yuma on the Gila River where



First and last pages of Jeffrey's 1 July 1851 letter to Professor Balfour. Written while on board the *Prince of Wales* at anchor waiting for passengers to board at Carston Roads in the Orkney Islands. Intervening pages show a gradual deterioration of handwriting quality.

he planned to be until the 1st of August. They further state that he directed that his letters be forwarded to Mr. F. Ames, Adam's & Co. Express in San Diego. McKinlay, Garroich & Company also reported that Jeffrey had been sick for some weeks before he dispatched "the proceeds of his excursions...which counts for part of his long stay in San Francisco."

Coville also quotes from John Ballenden's 1 February 1854 letter to Andrew Murray. Ballenden knew Jeffery at Fort Vancouver in 1852 and 1853. Ballenden was the Hudson's Bay Company's Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver. Ballenden expresses concern over the fate of "poor Jeffrey" and that if he followed his intended route he would have "some dangers of no very trifling nature to contend with."

Alexander Caulfield (A.C.) Anderson, of Victoria, British Columbia, father of James R., apparently knew Jeffrey and had met him while stationed at Fort Colville. His son James claimed to have known Jeffrey and was with him when he collected a woodpecker while in Victoria the spring of 1851 or 1852. In 1872, the father had a footnote in his *The Dominion of the West*: "Poor Jeffrey, it may be added, after wandering, sometimes in company with the writer, through a considerable portion of British Columbia, and braving all its fabulous dangers, met his fate in New Mexico, in 1852. He was murdered by a Spanish Outcast, for his mule and scanty traveling-appointments." There is no supporting evidence. In response (1936) to an inquiry by J. T. Johnstone, librarian at RBGE, Professor John Davidson states "either of his [A. C.'s] two sons are not taken very seriously here [B. C.]."

However, Sir Isaac Balfour told James Anderson when he was in Edinburgh that "after leaving Fort Victoria he (Jeffrey) found his way to San Francisco then in the throes of the gold excitement and was never heard of afterwards, probably murdered by the lawless ruffians who congregate at all mining camps." This brings us to: *another possibility*. Read between the lines in the following letter.

SAN FRANCISCO, 19th May 1854

My Dear Andrew,

I yesterday received your letter enclosing one for Jeffrey and one for Mr. Ogden, and with instructions to recall the former and stop his credits.

I went again to KcKinlay, Garvioch [*sic*] & Co., and they have deciphered his address to be Fort Yuma on the Gila River (just where it joins the Colorado) where he says he will probably be until the 1st of August, and directs his letters to be forwarded by Adams & Co.'s express to the care of their Agent at San Diego, Mr. F. Ames.

I accordingly put his letter in an envelope addressed in conformity with these instructions and took it to Adams & Co.'s express and told them (as they are Bankers as well as express men) that the letter contained his recall, and at the same time called their attention to the advertisement which I had caused to be put in the "Alta California" and which is:-

The Oregon Association, hereby notify that JOHN JEFFREY, Botanical Collector is so longer in their service, and that they will not be liable for any debts he may contract.

*By order of the Committee,
For ANDREW MURRAY, Secretary,
W. Murray, 131 Montgomery Street.*

I also called the attention Page, Bacon & Co. who I was told had cashed his dfts., to the advertisement, without comment. The same with Davidson (Rothschild's agent) and I told McKinlay & Garrioich of his recall.

I am inclined to think from their description of the man that he is honest. They say he is a hardworker, enthusiastic, very steady and temperate man, and that just before starting for San Diego he was some three weeks arranging the proceeds of his excursions, and they doubt not that he dispatched them. He had been for some weeks sick before that, which accounts for part of the long stay in San Francisco.

I think he has misapprehended the nature of his mission, and supposes that a single specimens or so of everything he saw was all that was required of him, fancying rather that he was sent to find out what was here, than that he was required to stock H. B. Majesty's Islands with it.

I met the Consul just now and he said he had received another letter for Jeffrey. I forwarded it along with yours. The Consul says that he (Jeffrey) never called at the Consulate, that there had been quite a budget of letters and other things there for him: which have since been forwarded to him by McKinlay Garvioch [*sic*] & Co., same time as your previous letters went.

I hardly expect to see him back, and I hope he may be able to show you on his arrival home that he is only an ass.

Among other things which he neglected to tell you of he informed McKinlay Garvoich [*sic*] & Co. that he could do nothing on Vancouver Island on account of the brush-wood which is so thick as to be impenetrable except by cutting your way axe in hand, information which I quietly put into our own pipe for our private smoking. Another thing- that he intended to come out here again - so we must "hurry up the cakes" although he will not be a formidable competitor.

The letter for Mr. Ogden I took to the Office of Allan Lowe & Co. the correspondents of the Hudson's Bay Co. in San Francisco and they have promised to forward it. A young Scotchman there told me that he knew Mr. Jeffrey very well and intended to have called on me on the sight of the advertisement, to inquire what it meant, as he believed him incapable of doing anything wrong, but said he was slow and very quiet, I gave as the reason that the Society was about to be dissolved.

You will possibly think that I ought to have been able to find Jeffrey when he was here, but at that time, I neither knew that McKinlay, Garvioch [*sic*] & Co. were acquainted with him, nor that Allan Lowe & Co. were connected with the Hudson's Bay Co.

Now then - I have done all you told me to do, and for the result you must "let her rip."

I spoke to Sam Price about it and he says the only satisfaction you can get out of a fellow of that kind is to come out here and shoot him through the navel with a Mississippi Yangur, nobody will say any thing to you; or if there is an investigation it will be brought in justifiable homicide.

There was an advertisement in one of the papers the other day, somewhat after this fashion -

“The publication of the Police Gazette will be postponed for a month in consequence of the assassination to the Editor”.

Them's not the words, but them's the sentiments. Cool, isn't it?

I remain,
Your affectionate brother,
(Sgd.) W. MURRAY

What an interesting letter. As far as I know, this is the first time the entire text has been published. It speaks to Jeffrey's character and a tantalizing prospect. Maybe Jeffrey never left San Francisco, but his goods did.

The only notice calling Jeffrey in that I could find published in the Daily Alta California was:

John Jeffrey, Collector for the Oregon Botanical Association, if in San Francisco or the neighborhood, is hereby requested to call at the office of W. Murray, 170 Montgomery Street to receive a communication from the Society.

San Francisco, Jan. 27, 1854.

The ad ran daily from 29 January until 4 February 1854. Why William did not give brother Andrew the text of the ad as published is not known. I suspect that William realized that if he ever would be able to lure in Jeffrey he would have to use more temperate language. But, if Jeffrey called, there is no record of it. That could be because he had already left San Francisco on his way south to Fort Yuma and San Diego. Or, he might have met a far more sinister fate at the hands of Balfour's ruffians in San Francisco. Just how unhappy was the Oregon Association with Jeffrey's performance? And, was the life insurance policy allowed to lapse because they wanted no investigation of Jeffrey's disappearance?

Dismissal for “neglect of duty”

As the subscribers and members of the Oregon Expedition Committee became increasingly unhappy with the quality and quantity of Jeffrey's efforts, W. Gibson Craig seemed particularly irked. In his 5 January 1854 letter to Andrew Murray he wrote, “Jeffrey is indeed a most extraordinary fellow, and his conduct is utterly incomprehensible.” Again on 25 January 1854 “It is most extraordinary that there is even by this Mail no letter from Jeffrey, who must at least a month before it was dispatched have received all your letters. You must now call a meeting of the Committee that we may consider what is to be done.”

Interestingly, Jeffrey's three-year contract with the Association began 29 May 1850. Did this mean that his contract terminated 29 May 1853? He was still making collections in the fall of 1853. No wonder he behaved as he did in San Francisco. He was apparently ill and no longer in the employ of the Association.

The Minutes of a meeting of the Committee on 23 March 1854 summarize what was known, or not known, of Jeffrey's last days in San Francisco. Given as present were Sir William Gibson Craig in the Chair, Wm. Murray, Esq. of Henderland, James McNab, Esq., and Andrew Murray. W. S. Secy. Complaints

included, “The quantity of seeds sent home in Box No. 10 was so exceedingly trifling for a year's collecting that it was obvious that Mr. Jeffrey was not discharging his duty to the Association in this respect either.” The committee unanimously resolved to dismiss Mr. Jeffrey for neglect of duty. The secretary was instructed to inform Jeffrey.

The Association had a strongly worded legal document made on “the Thirtieth day of September one thousand eight hundred and fifty four years” in Scotland whose purpose was “... to make payment and deliverance to the pursuers of the sum of Seven hundred pounds, or such other sum or sums as may be owing by them to the said John Jeffrey...” Although I have no evidence Jeffrey knew of this directly, he may have sensed it was coming (if he were still alive). Perhaps the purpose of the dismissal was to officially absolve the Association of any responsibility for a former employee who had mysteriously disappeared?

A final insult

In 1858, several years after Jeffrey's death and after the realization that Jeffrey's work was less than perfect, Sir William Jackson Hooker described *Penstemon jeffreyanus*, the plant Jeffrey had discovered and collected near Deadwood in the Scott Valley in 1853. According to Stearn (1992) the name of person used as a species name is normally given a Latin genitive ending, as in *Pinus jeffreyi*, or converted to an adjective agreeing with the generic name, usually an -iana ending. If, however, the name is merely given as a compliment, the name should be rendered in an



Azure penstemon (*Penstemon azureus*, formerly *P. jeffreyanus*). Photo by Norm Jensen.

adjective form, with the termination -anus. Jeffrey clearly was the discoverer of the plant and as the botanist, John Lindley suggested in 1832, "If the individual is the discoverer of the plant...the specific name should be in the genitive singular." As in *Penstemon jeffreyi*, not *jeffreyanus*. Hooker may have been expressing the Oregon Association's frustration with Jeffrey's overall performance. For the record, Sir William and Professor Lindley were asked to name expedition specimens, so it is not as though they didn't know what they were doing. If you are still wondering what this is all about, pronounce the specific epithet out loud.

As William Murray might say, "them's the sentiments. Cool, isn't it?"

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