

Excerpt: *Lower American River: Prehistory to Parkway*



. . . The Capital City Wheelmen used the American River and the roads along it for recreational purposes as early as 1886. Since they did not have a good road on which to ride, the Wheelmen voted in 1896 to build a cinder path to Folsom. They began building an experimental path from 31st and J streets out to the levee near Brighton junction. This section of the path was successful, so the club began to make plans to extend the route to Folsom. Each member was assessed \$1 and Sacramento merchants and citizens donated \$900. The first permanent section was completed as far as Brighton (near present-day Sacramento State University) in April 1896, and on April 12, some 500 cyclists rode the new path. A second section was completed to Alder Creek, but funds began to run out. Folsom merchants came to the rescue, and the path was completed to Folsom.

The County Board of Supervisors banned other vehicles from using the trail. However, farmers found it convenient to use the cinder path during the muddy winters so parts of the path had to be replaced with decomposed granite. With the new surface, a new speed record of one hour and 2 minutes replaced the old mark of one hour and 40 minutes between Sacramento and Folsom.

In 1973, The American River Parkway trail system was designated the "Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail." The impetus for the project was a \$100,000 bequest by Charles M. Goethe, local philanthropist, naturalist and history buff. Goethe had asked that the money go toward a trail along the river honoring Smith who, in 1827 was the first American to travel along the river as he and his small party of fur trappers sought a pass over the mountains . . .