



c.1859

U.S. Senate Historical Office | Washington, D.C.

Delazon Smith (1816-1860)

Delazon Smith was born in New Berlin, New York. He attended Oberlin College in Ohio in 1834 but withdrew because he was against the anti-slavery movement of the school. Smith studied law in Cleveland, Ohio. He helped establish a newspaper in Rochester, New York and edited the *New York Watchman*. He published a paper titled *True Jeffersonian* in 1840.

Smith stumped for Presidents Van Buren and Johnson and was appointed special commissioner to Ecuador by President Taylor. He became a farmer in Iowa in 1846. It took him five months to get to Oregon in 1852, traveling from Missouri to The Dalles. Smith lost all his cattle during that venture and settled in Linn County where he opened a law office in Albany.¹ He also established the *Albany Democrat* newspaper.²

Smith was a member of the Salem Clique and in 1854 was elected to the Territorial House of Representatives. He was a delegate to the Oregon Constitutional Convention. In 1859 Smith was a United States Senator from Oregon for one month. He believed that the Rogue River Wars, 1855-1856, were started to “swindle the government.”² Smith and Governor Joseph Lane were pro-slavery and sided with the South for secession during the Civil War. He died due adverse complications of alcohol and was buried in Albany.³

Letters to Bush from 1853 to 1859

Smith’s letters discuss local political campaigns and nominations, political speeches, statehood, articles for Bush to print and comments on Bush’s editorials. Smith asked Bush’s opinion regarding running for Congress in 1857. Smith was frustrated with Oregon not being admitted to the Union in 1858. He also tried to mend the relationship between Lane and Bush by making the case for Lane.

¹ *Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, Oregon* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903), 920.

² Philip Cogswell, Jr., *Capitol Names: Individuals Woven into Oregon’s History* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1977), 88.

³ Arthur Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1961), 186.

⁴ Malcolm Clark, Jr., *Eden Seekers: The Settlement of Oregon, 1818-1862* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 302.