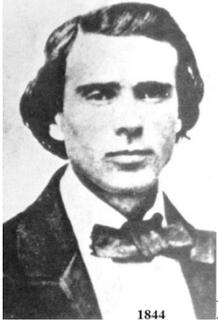


# JOSIAH GREGG BIOGRAPHY

Chuck Staples, CSSA Historian

**Gregg, Dr Howard Countian Josiah (1806–1850)—a self-taught naturalist of the early American frontier—taking the Santa Fe trail west from Missouri in 1831 for health reasons—discoverer of *Cereus (Peniocereus) greggii*.**



Born in Overton County, Tennessee on 19 July 1806, Howard Countian Josiah Gregg became a merchant, explorer and naturalist. At the time Josiah was born there wasn't any organized civil life that existed west of the Mississippi River. By the time he was 6 years old his family settled at the edge of the frontier in Missouri—even had an Indian raid at the farm when he was 8. By the time Josiah reached his teenage years into his 20s, he studied for the medical profession and then the law profession completing neither of them. By early 1831 consumption made him so feeble that he had trouble with any daily studies or chores. He was told by his doctor to head out on a wagon train going to Santa Fe (New Mexico)— began mending on that trip. This led him to a profession as a trader, making a number of caravan trips back and forth across the Great Plains on the Santa Fe Trail. He observed and recorded everything of a scientific nature on these trips.

During Josiah's trading and traveling trips, he studied medical books. By 1845 he entered the medical school at the University of Louisville in Kentucky where he earned an honorary Doctor of Medicine degree in March 1846.

Josiah's greatest accomplishment, with the help of a friend, US Army Surgeon and amateur botanist Dr John Milton Bigelow (1804–1878), was an book: "*Commerce of the Prairies or the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader during eight expeditions across The Great Western Prairies and a residence of nearly nine years in Northern Mexico*" in 2 volumes, 1844 with 320 pages and 1845 with 318 pages.

Of interest to important succulentists is the succulent plants discovered by Dr Josiah Gregg that were named in his honor:

*Cereus (Peniocereus) greggii* named after him by Dr Georg Theodor Engelmann (1809–1884) in 1848.

*Sedum greggii* named after him by William Botting Hemsley (1843–1924) in 1878.

Josiah discovered a couple of *Opuntia* plants that were described by Dr Englemann in 1856:

*O. (Corynopuntia) bulbispina*.

*O. stenopetala*.

All plants are from various States in Mexico; however, *Cereus (Peniocereus) greggii* is also found in southern Texas..

By 1848 Josiah heard of the discovery of gold in California. Looking to further explorations in California, he left by ship from Mexico to San Francisco, arriving the first day of September 1849. Later that year he led an exploring party into the mountains near the Trinity River area of northwestern California.

On 25 February 1850, he fell from his horse near Clear Lake, California and died, without speaking, from starvation, illness and exhaustion.

## References:

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