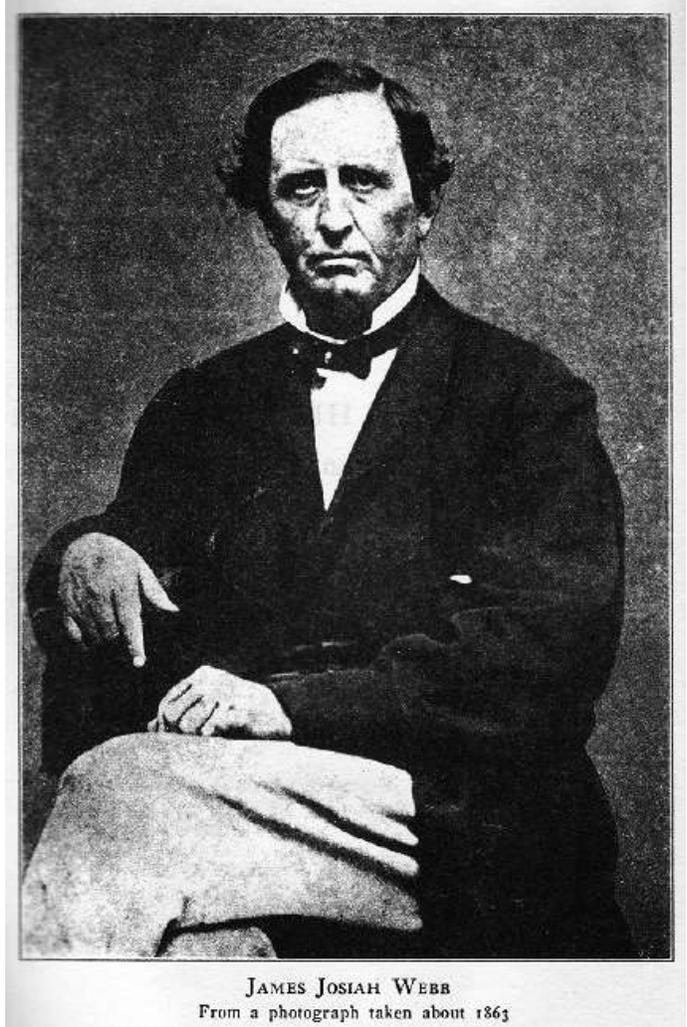


# James Josiah Webb

(1818 – 1889)

James Josiah Webb was one of the most prominent traders on the Santa Fe Trail from the 1840s into the early 1860s. He made 18 trips to Santa Fe as well as maintaining a store there. He had partners in his endeavors including George P. Doan and William S. Messervy and then John M. Kingsbury from 1853 to 1861. Webb was born in Warren, Connecticut, in 1818. He arrived in St. Louis in February 1843 and opened a dry goods store with funds advanced by his father. The business failed. In a memoir written in his retirement, he recalled that he was "out of business and ready for any adventure that offered employment and a reasonable prospect of future profit." He met some traders just returned from Santa Fe and "after conversation with them I concluded to try my credit and see what I could do towards buying an outfit." He contracted for \$1200 in goods and made his way to Independence, Missouri. There, S. C. Owens, who financed traders on credit, furnished him with "a wagon that cost \$100, four yoke of oxen that cost \$28 per yoke, and other advanced to the amount of about \$100." His adventure had begun.



Politics also attracted Webb. He served in the New Mexico Territorial Legislature and Connecticut State Senate. By the 1850s he resided permanently in Connecticut, managing his business affairs from there while his partner John M. Kingsbury operated their store in Santa Fe.

Webb died in Hamden, Connecticut, in 1889, having retired from trade in the Southwest in 1861. He left a comprehensive archive of his years in the Santa Fe Trade, more extensive than any other trader. His memoirs were published posthumously in 1931 as *Adventures in the Santa Fe Trade, 1844-1847*, with a subsequent edition appearing in 1995 from the University of Nebraska Press. (All quotations here are from this later edition.) The Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis has 20 bound volumes of his letters, journals and accounts as well as other material. Other depositories of valuable interest are the Hampden (Connecticut) Historical Society Library and the DeGolyer Library at Southern Methodist University. Also available is John M. Kingsbury's voluminous correspondence with Webb, *Trading in Santa Fe - 1853-1861* edited by Jane Lenz Elder and David J. Weber.