

the mountains and then garnered valuable information from Melgares during his captivity in Mexico. Ironically, this relationship provided the American explorer much useful information, leading to the Santa Fe Trail, though it might be too much to link it to provoking the Mexican War and the loss of much territory to the United States. Still, it was Melgares who welcomed American traders to Santa Fe when it opened to trade from Missouri.

Readers of this volume may find most interesting William Foley's careful essay detailing the many and varied intrigues of General James Wilkinson. Fortunately for Pike, the explorer and his exploits play only a very small supporting role in this drama, but Foley's essay provides essential insight into the motives and operations of the man who sent Pike up the Mississippi and to the southwestern frontier. The essay (and Wilkinson's eventual demise) provides a fitting final chapter to the volume. While mostly debunking the myth of Pike's alleged spying mission, these original essays provide much material for contemplating the meaning of his extensive exploits.

Life, Death, and Archaeology at Fort Blue Mounds: A Settlers' Fortification of the Black Hawk War, by Robert A. Birmingham. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2012. 152 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95 paper.

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When Black Hawk's band of Sauk left Iowa in 1832 to reclaim their traditional homeland east of the Mississippi, settlers panicked and built dozens of small stockaded forts in Illinois and Wisconsin. The apprehension of the occupants of a small fort at Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, was well founded. Attacks by Sauk and other Indians allied with Black Hawk killed three occupants. Fort Blue Mounds briefly became the main bivouac and supply point of the volunteer militia attempting to stop the uprising. The fort's historical importance in a campaign that essentially ended Indian claims to land east of the Mississippi is underappreciated. The uprising ended in disgrace for the United States after hundreds of Indian women, children, and men were massacred along the Mississippi River attempting to return to Iowa, a dishonorable act that taints all historical events and places associated with the Black Hawk uprising.

After the uprising ended, settlers and miners used the fort buildings through the 1850s. In 1921 the state of Wisconsin acquired the quarter-

acre of land that the fort occupied. A historical tablet and property markers identified the spot, which soon fell into neglect. In 1991 Robert Birmingham began efforts to identify the fort's location. Although the site was state property, the property markers had been removed and the edges of the fort had been eaten away by plowing. The size of the parcel seemed far too small for the fort; historical accounts described a fort 150 feet long.

Excavation by volunteers during summer weekends over several years traced out the fort wall and trench, probable blockhouse locations, and internal features such as pits and a hearth. The entire fort area had been plowed after it was abandoned, so only deep features were well preserved; the floors of fort buildings were obliterated. The biggest surprise was how small the fort was; it was closer to 40 feet on a side, a claustrophobic enclosure of a cabin and two blockhouses for 50 people for four months.

Birmingham does an admirable job of summarizing the historical context of the Black Hawk uprising, the archaeology program, the features encountered, and the artifacts recovered, describing their significance in layperson's terms. As with virtually every fort excavation, difficulties arise in trying to differentiate fort-era remains from post-fort occupations. The later sections of the book provide an overview and summary of other forts used during the Black Hawk uprising, an overdue listing that I do not think has been attempted previously.

If I were to find fault with this report, it would be with the occasionally lazy editing; there are more typos and other errors than one would expect in a glossy publication, and the prose can drift into clichés. When I read "alarms spread like prairie fire" in the very first sentence, I groaned, afraid of what I was about to venture into. Fortunately, Birmingham's writing is usually superior to this, and I read the entire book in one satisfying evening.

Birmingham has pulled off the nearly impossible: leading a multi-year archaeological project with a crew almost entirely of volunteers, analyzing all the artifacts, maps, and data, and producing a creditable, well-written summary of results accompanied by research that places the site in historical perspective. Many well-intentioned archaeologists have started down this path; most seem to fail. It is encouraging to know that it can be done.