

## THE EXPEDITION OF ZEBULON MONTGOMERY PIKE TO THE SOURCES OF THE MISSISSIPPI

With the purchase of Louisiana in 1803 the United States assumed the responsibility of the control of a territory whose expanse was twice the nation's area and whose borders were little known. When the news of the conclusion of the negotiations reached President Jefferson he was surprised and not a little embarrassed, for it was his plan to purchase simply the port of New Orleans and such tract of land thereabouts as would gain the command of the mouth of the Mississippi, which was so vital to American commerce. But now he found the whole of the vaguely defined Province of Louisiana thrust upon him, and with it the burden of a fifteen million dollar debt.<sup>1</sup>

Jefferson showed his good statesmanship when at this critical period he planned for an immediate and thorough exploration of the new territory.<sup>2</sup> At the south a command

<sup>1</sup> Hosmer's *The History of the Louisiana Purchase*, p. 148; Hosmer's *A Short History of the Mississippi Valley*, pp. 118-127; Salter's *Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*, p. 51; Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 221, 222.

<sup>2</sup> For a full account of the history of this period, see Adams's *History of the United States*, Vol. II, pp. 1-134; McMaster's *A History of the People of the United States*, Vol. II, pp. 621-635; Vol. III, pp. 1-36.

<sup>3</sup> Even before the purchase of the Louisiana territory President Jefferson transmitted to Congress a confidential message under date of January 18, 1803, in which he advocated the exploration of the newly acquired territory and outlined an expedition which should "explore the whole line, even to the Western ocean, have conferences with the natives on the subject of commercial intercourse, get admission among them for our traders, as others are admitted, agree on convenient deposits for an interchange of articles, and return with the information acquired, in the course of two summers."—*Annals of Congress*, 7th Congress, Second Session, 1802-1803, pp. 25, 26. See also Richardson's *Messengers and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. I, pp. 353, 354.

of the lower Mississippi had opened the West to the control of the government by way of numerous tributaries. But to the north, west, and southeast there was much uncertainty as to the boundaries. On the north the territory extended to the as yet undiscovered sources of the Mississippi. It was assumed that the mountains, which at that time were almost unknown to the white man, formed the western boundary line, but the amount of territory which lay between them and the Mississippi was a matter of mere conjecture. And still more uncertainty prevailed with respect to the boundary on the southeast.<sup>3</sup>

In his choice of explorers President Jefferson exercised remarkable judgment, of which the results of the explorations are ample evidence. In the army he found the most efficient men for the work, although few scientific men were available even from that source. Moreover, funds for carrying on the work were not to be had without much effort. Jefferson seems to have been reluctant in asking for extra means for the work — probably because he felt that there would be opposition to an appropriation, since the administration was strongly in favor of “economical reform.”<sup>4</sup>

Early in 1804 Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark were chosen for the purpose of exploring the Missouri to its source and of discovering the most advantageous water route to the Pacific Ocean. This expedition covered a period of about three years and is without doubt the most remarkable and creditable of the early explorations of the Louisiana country.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 221, 222.

<sup>4</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 222, 223. See also Salter's *Iowa The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*, pp. 52, 53, 61; and McMaster *A History of the People of the United States*, Vol. II, pp. 628, 629.

<sup>5</sup> For a complete account of this expedition, see Thwaites's *Original Journal of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vols. I-VII.

Contemporaneous with and probably not less worthy than the work of Lewis and Clark were the explorations of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, who, however, had the misfortune to receive his commission from the commander of the western army, General James Wilkinson, instead of from the government.<sup>6</sup>

Born in what is now a part of Trenton, New Jersey, on January 5, 1779,<sup>7</sup> Zebulon M. Pike moved during his childhood to Easton, Pennsylvania. There he received such education as the rural schools of the time afforded. He is described by some of his school-mates as "a boy of slender form, very fair complexion, gentle and retiring disposition, but of resolute spirit" and always capable of defending himself when put to the test.<sup>8</sup> The time spent in obtaining an education was necessarily short, since he entered his father's company as a cadet when he was about fifteen

<sup>6</sup> The idea that Pike's Mississippi expedition was conducted by the government seems quite general. The expedition was entirely in the control of General Wilkinson. Later government officials approved of the undertaking.—See Salter's *The Eastern Border of Iowa in 1805-6* in the *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. X, p. 107.

General James Wilkinson lost his reputation in connection with the Burr conspiracy. Although he was tried and acquitted, evidence later appeared which proved without doubt that he was a traitor. And, indeed, it has been thought by some that Pike's explorations were a scheme on the part of Wilkinson to obtain more definite information concerning the western country, which might be used in carrying out the traitorous plot. However this may have been, Pike was beyond doubt unconscious of any such purpose.

<sup>7</sup> The data concerning Zebulon M. Pike's early life used in this paper are for the most part taken from Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 220, 221.

The father of Zebulon Montgomery Pike was Major Zebulon Pike, a soldier in the Revolutionary War and captain of infantry in the army of the United States in 1792. He received a promotion to the rank of Major in 1800, and served in the first regiment of infantry under Colonel Hamtramk in 1802.

Among the ancestors of Zebulon Montgomery Pike was one Captain John Pike, who was noted in the traditions of the family for his gallant service in the Indian Wars.

<sup>8</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, p. 220.

years old, and received the commission of ensign at the age of twenty.<sup>9</sup>

It was on April 1, 1802, that Pike was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant of the First Regiment of United States Infantry. And under date of July 30, 1805, he received orders<sup>10</sup> from General Wilkinson to undertake the exploration of the Mississippi River to its sources, noting the rivers, prairies, islands, mines, quarries, and timber, as well as Indian villages and settlements. He was instructed to keep a journal in which distances, calculated by time, were to be noted together with comments on the "winds and weather". Furthermore, suitable locations for military posts were to be selected and reasonable means for conciliating the Indians were to be employed.<sup>11</sup>

The journal of the expedition is an interesting and most valuable source of information. The original edition,<sup>12</sup> was published in 1810 by Lieutenant Pike, and is divided into three parts, each dealing with a single expedition. To these parts are added numerous appendices, charts, and tables. On the whole, the work is exceedingly complicated in its arrangement, and little or no effort seems to have been made to put the material in good English. It is inter-

<sup>9</sup> Coues's *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. I, p. xxii.

<sup>10</sup> The letter containing the orders was transmitted by General Wilkinson from St. Louis. It appears in full in Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part III, pp. 65, 66.

<sup>11</sup> All of the purposes noted are mentioned in General Wilkinson's communication of July 30, 1805.

<sup>12</sup> There is a publication relative to the Mississippi expedition which appeared in 1807. This, however, was not written by Lieutenant Pike but by some person who had access to his notes. There seems to be no evidence concerning the identity of the writer.

From Lieutenant Pike's original edition of 1810, an English edition was prepared under the editorial supervision of Dr. Thomas Rees. There is also an edition in French and one in Dutch.—Coues's *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. I, pp. xxxiii-xliv.

ting to note that at the close of the author's preface a note by the publisher is inserted to the effect that he owes it to truth, and to colonel Pike, to state that he very much doubts whether any book ever went to press under so many disadvantages''.

Lieutenant Pike himself realized many of its defects. The following extracts from one of his letters will serve to explain many of its faults:

The journal in itself will have little to strike the imagination, but a dull detail of our daily march. . . . The daily occurrences were written at night, frequently by firelight, when extremely fatigued, and the cold so severe as to freeze the ink in my pen, of course have little claim to elegance of expression or style; . . . I do not possess the qualifications of the naturalist, and even had they been mine, it would have been impossible to have gratified them to any great extent, as we passed with rapidity over the country we surveyed. . . . And indeed, my thoughts were too much engrossed in making provisions for the exigencies of the morrow, to attempt a science which requires time and a placidity of mind which seldom fell to my lot.<sup>13</sup>

Of the three divisions of the work the first, with its appendices, is devoted entirely to an account of the expedition to the sources of the Mississippi. The material contained therein forms the basis of the account given in the following pages of this essay.

Late in the afternoon of August 9, 1805, Lieutenant Pike sailed from his encampment near St. Louis in a keel boat with a party of twenty men,<sup>14</sup> carrying with him provisions

<sup>13</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part I, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> In the Appendix to Part III, pp. 67, 68, of the edition of 1810, Lieutenant Pike gives a list of the persons employed in the expedition. Of the twenty men in the company, there were two corporals, one sergeant, and seventeen privates. The name of an interpreter is also included in the list but he was not of the original party which started from the encampment near St. Louis.

for only four months. For more than eight months he and his party were to push their way northward amid dangers and hardships which all but cost them their lives. But with the consciousness that he was the first citizen of the United States to undertake the ascent of the river, and with the assurance that whatever he should discover would be eagerly received by the public, his enthusiasm rose above any misgivings with regard to the trials of the undertaking.

With considerable difficulty, due to rainy weather and the numerous islands in the channel, Lieutenant Pike and his company made their way to the Des Moines River, which marks the junction of the present Commonwealths of Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. Here the rapids presented a formidable obstacle — more especially because there was no one on board who had ever passed them. The rapids were eleven miles in length “with successive ridges and shoals extending from shore to shore. . . . The shoals continue the whole distance.”<sup>15</sup> In the midst of the difficulty the party was met by an agent to the Sac Indians in this vicinity, who piloted them safely to his establishment above the rapids. Here Lieutenant Pike found himself on the east bank of the river at a point where the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, is now located. Directly opposite was the village of the Sac Indians on the present site of Montrose, Iowa.

Impressed with the suitability of the location for a trading establishment for the Sac, Fox, Iowa, and Sioux Indians of the region, Lieutenant Pike tarried for the greater part of a day. In council with “the chief men of the village” he expressed the desire of the President of the United States “to be more intimately acquainted with the

<sup>15</sup> This description appears in the entry of August 20th in Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, pp. 4, 5.

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<sup>16</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. p. 5.

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situation, wants, &c. of the different nations of the red people, in our newly acquired territory of Louisiana".<sup>16</sup> In addition there was some discussion of the location of a trading establishment, but no definite conclusions were reached.

After presenting the Indians with some "tobacco, Knives, and whiskey", Lieutenant Pike proceeded up the river about six miles, landing on the spot where Fort Madison was erected three years later and where the city by the same name now stands. Lieutenant Pike made no particular mention of the place, nor did he recommend it as a suitable location for a fort or trading post.<sup>17</sup>

Two days later the party reached the present site of Burlington, Iowa, which Lieutenant Pike mentions as "a very handsome situation for a garrison"<sup>18</sup> and describes in some detail.

The channel of the river passes under the hill, which is about 60 feet perpendicular, and level on the top. Four hundred yards in the rear, there is a small prairie of 8 or 10 acres, which would be a convenient spot for gardens; and on the east side of the river, there is a beautiful prospect over a large prairie, as far as the eye can extend, now and then interrupted by groves of trees. Directly under the rock is a limestone spring, which, after an hour's work, would afford water amply sufficient for the consumption of a regiment. The landing is bold and safe, and at the lower part of the hill, a road

<sup>16</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Some few writers have erroneously credited Pike with the founding of Fort Madison. For instance, in the *Portrait and Biographical Album of Lee County, Iowa*, p. 627, the writer claims that the first settlers at Fort Madison were troops sent out by our government under command of Captain Z. M. Pike to protect the country both from the British and the Indians. A similar error is made by Stevens in his *Black Hawk War*, p. 37.

The selection of Fort Madison was made in September, 1808, by Lieutenant Alpha Kingsley.—*Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. VI, p. 314.

<sup>18</sup> This site is the one now occupied by Crapo Park at Burlington, Iowa.

may be made for a team in half an hour. Black and white oak timber in abundance. The mountain continues about two miles, and has five springs bursting from it in that distance.<sup>19</sup>

In this vicinity the Indians seemed to be quite numerous. Horses and other signs of inhabitants were seen along the river bank. A few miles above the bluffs Lieutenant Pike met a company of Indian traders, with three boats from Mackinac, who informed him that out on the prairie only two and a half miles was located one of the largest Sac villages.<sup>20</sup>

After continuing a short distance up the river, Pike and one of his men went on shore for a hunt.<sup>21</sup> The journal does not state which bank of the river they were on, but from the description of the country it is not difficult to infer that they were hunting on Iowa soil. Owing to the marshiness of the ground, two of their favorite dogs became exhausted and were lost in the return to shore. Two men immediately volunteered for the search. But at evening neither men nor dogs had returned. Lieutenant Pike, however, was not in the habit of waiting for anyone on shore. Accordingly, the party continued up stream but always camped on the Iowa side and made every effort to attract the attention of the lost men by firing guns at various intervals. But the men were bewildered by the marshy ground and the thick undergrowth of the lowlands, and for eight days they wandered northward half-exhausted from lack of food. They finally chanced to fall upon a village of Fox Indians, whose chief gave them corn and moccasins and sent them with a guide to the mines of Dubuque where they

<sup>19</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Lieutenant Pike was now at a point which was considered half way between St. Louis and Prairie du Chien.

<sup>21</sup> This was on Saturday, August 24, 1805.

found their commander and the remainder of his company.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Pike had passed the mouth of the Iowa River, which he merely mentions in his journal. He had passed the present site of Muscatine — at one time known as Bloomington — which he describes as the point “where the river Hills join the Mississippi”. He had crossed the rapids of Rock River with even more difficulty than those of the Des Moines. It was here that he met Black Hawk, who recalled the occasion in detail many years later. Although Lieutenant Pike makes no mention of the meeting with Black Hawk, the Indian chief’s account of the visit is so accurate in many points, which may be verified, that it is hardly to be doubted.

Black Hawk stated that when the boat arrived at Rock River “the young chief came on shore with his interpreter”, made a speech, and gave some presents to the Indians. Continuing, the chief said:

We were all well pleased with the speech of the young chief. He gave us good advice; said our American father would treat us well. He presented us an American flag, which was hoisted. He then requested us to pull down our *British flags* — and give him our *British medals* — promising to send us others on his return to St. Louis. This we declined, as we wished to have *two Fathers!* . . . He went to the head of the Mississippi, and then returned to St. Louis. . . . He was a good man, and a great brave and died in his country’s service.<sup>22</sup>

It was at noon on Sunday, September 1st, that Lieutenant Pike arrived at Dubuque’s lead mines, where he was “saluted with a field piece, and received with every mark of attention, by Monsieur Dubuque, the proprietor”.<sup>23</sup> Pike

<sup>22</sup> *Autobiography of Black Hawk*, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Pike’s *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 10.

Julien Dubuque, a French Canadian, came to this vicinity for the purpose of trading with the Indians. Taking a squaw as his wife, he soon made friends

was charged by General Wilkinson with orders to make certain investigations relative to the lead mines. But owing to the fact that there were no horses at the house and the mines were six miles away, the Lieutenant found it "impossible to make a report by actual inspection". His report was therefore nothing more than a series of evasive and indefinite answers to questions put by Pike.<sup>24</sup> In transmitting the report to Wilkinson, Lieutenant Pike himself says that "the answers seem to carry with them the semblance of equivocation".

While at Dubuque's quarters, Lieutenant Pike took on board a Frenchman by the name of Blondeau, who proved a useful addition to the party since he could speak the language of the Indians. Up to this point Lieutenant Pike had been without an interpreter, and for this reason had found himself at a great disadvantage among the Indians. But with means for making known the purpose of his exploration, "he found himself at once the object of friendly attention",<sup>25</sup> although the first question put by the Indians was always whether they were "for war, or if going to war".

Through his interpreter Lieutenant Pike learned that the Indians of this vicinity were much in dread of white men, that "the women and children were frightened at the very name of an American boat", and that the men believed the

with the Foxes. The discovery of the lead mines induced him to secure "a permit to work the mines, with a monopoly of the right" under date of November 22, 1788. Thus was founded the first white settlement in Iowa.

Dubuque died on March 24, 1810. His claim was sold at St. Louis for the payment of his debts.— See Salter's *Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*, pp. 41-45, 79, 86.

<sup>24</sup> The report to General Wilkinson appears in the Appendix to Part I, p. 5, of the original edition of 1810. Perhaps the only definite statement made by Dubuque was that the mines were about twenty-seven leagues long and from one to three leagues wide, yielding from twenty to forty thousand pounds of lead per annum.

<sup>25</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, p. 238.

whites to be "very quarrelsome, and much for war, and also very brave". Such information was "used as prudence suggested".<sup>26</sup>

On September 4th Lieutenant Pike reached Prairie du Chien at the junction of the Wisconsin and Mississippi, and opposite McGregor, Iowa. Prairie du Chien, an early French settlement, had been distinguished as a center for the fur trade of the lake region, but at the time of Pike's visit it was little more than a village of Indian traders.<sup>27</sup> Among these traders Lieutenant Pike spent several days, engaged in making choice of a suitable location for a post, holding councils with neighboring tribes of Indians, and in preparing for the remainder of the journey.

As the most suitable location for a military post in this region, Lieutenant Pike recommended a bluff just north of the present town of McGregor, Iowa, which commanded both the Wisconsin and the Mississippi.<sup>28</sup> Plenty of timber and a spring near-by added to the desirability of the situation. On the whole, however, the Lieutenant considered the Burlington site far superior.

Finding that it would be impossible to continue the ascent of the river with so large a craft, Lieutenant Pike hired two light barges and began the work of transferring provisions and baggage to the new boats.

With the addition of two interpreters, Pierre Rosseau and Joseph Reinulle,<sup>29</sup> the party left Prairie du Chien on September 8th "with some expectation and hope of seeing

<sup>26</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, pp. 11, 12.

<sup>27</sup> For an account of Prairie du Chien and other trading posts of the upper Mississippi, see Folwell's *Minnesota*, pp. 39, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Coues's *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. I, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> This name is probably that of Joseph Reinville or Renville. He was an interpreter of some note.

the head of the Mississippi and the town of Saint Louis" before the end of the winter. This statement, in a letter to General Wilkinson,<sup>30</sup> shows how little the Lieutenant realized that many weeks of suffering and discouragement lay between him and the source of the Mississippi, and that months of bitter hardship must separate him from his encampment at St. Louis. Nevertheless, such hopes as this alone kept up his courage and made possible the long struggle.

A few miles above Prairie du Chien the party met Wabasha, the chief of the four lower bands of the Sioux. The Sioux had been enjoying a feast the night before. In consequence, the salute which they gave to Lieutenant Pike and his party as they arrived in front of the lodges was attended by "some hazard", since "some of them, even tried their dexterity, to see how near the boat they could strike. They may, indeed, be said, to have struck on every side of us. When landed, I had my pistols in my belt, and sword in hand."<sup>31</sup> Hereupon the chief invited Lieutenant Pike and some of his men to accompany him to his lodge for a council. In a speech of considerable length Wabasha expressed his pleasure at having the young Lieutenant in his own village and a desire always to remain at peace with the white and red people. To this Lieutenant Pike replied in a statement of the objects and purposes of his expedition. He gratefully accepted a pipe which Wabasha presented to him to be shown to the upper bands as a token of peace, which later was of much service.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part I, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> This pipe was used in the council at Leech Lake on February 16, 1806.

While in the village Lieutenant Pike witnessed a "medicine dance" which was attended by "many curious manoeuvres. Men and women danced indiscriminately. They were all dressed in the gayest manner; each had in their hand, a small skin of some description, and would frequently run up, point their skin, and give a puff with their breath; when the person blown at, whether man or woman, would fall, and appear to be almost lifeless, or in great agony; but would recover slowly, rise and join in the dance". This they called their great medicine dance or dance of religion.<sup>33</sup>

Before his departure Pike presented the chief with tobacco, knives and eight gallons of made whiskey (three-fourths water). Leaving the Sioux village on the afternoon of September 10th, and proceeding but a few miles further, Lieutenant Pike crossed what is now the northern boundary of the State of Iowa.<sup>34</sup> Seven months passed before he again camped on Iowa soil.

On September 23rd the party reached a Sioux village located near the site of old Fort Snelling. Here a council with the chiefs of the village was held by which Lieutenant Pike secured for the government a grant of a tract of land containing about 100,000 acres, for which he gave in return presents to the amount of only about two hundred dollars.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Coues's *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. I, p. 48; Salter's *The Eastern Border of Iowa in 1805-6* in *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. X, p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> This tract of land was near the mouth of the Minnesota River and later included the site of Fort Snelling and the city of Minneapolis.—*Pike's Explorations* in *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. I, p. 532.

A copy of the speech delivered by Lieutenant Pike, a copy of the treaty, and a copy of a letter addressed to General Wilkinson on the subject appear as Documents No. 3 and 4 in the Appendix to Part I of Pike's *An Account of*

So far as negotiations with Indian tribes are concerned, this was doubtless Lieutenant Pike's most important enterprise. Referring to the transaction in a letter to General Wilkinson, he remarks that the grant was obtained "for a song". At the same time he values the land at only two hundred thousand dollars.

Lieutenant Pike's speech in the council forms a part of the journal and is a most interesting document. It shows a keen understanding of the character of the Indians as well as remarkable tact. There is, however, one peculiar and altogether amusing portion of the document, which is significant of Lieutenant Pike's usual attitude toward the subject referred to. After a rather strong exhortation against the purchase of intoxicating liquors, with much emphasis on their injurious effects, Lieutenant Pike concludes his speech as follows: "I now present you with some of your father's tobacco, and some other trifling things, as a memorandum of my good will, and before my departure I will give you some liquor to clear your throats". This clearing process seems to have required sixty gallons of liquor.<sup>36</sup>

When Lieutenant Pike had reached the Falls of St. Anthony he began to realize that he had made a serious blunder in starting on his expedition so late in the season; for many of his men, unused to the climate and necessary hardships, were daily succumbing to illness and fatigue. Pike writes of the situation as follows: "These unhappy circumstances . . . convinced me, that if I had no regard for my own health and constitution, I should have

*Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, etc.* (original edition, 1810), pp. 6-13.

For a detailed criticism of the treaty and accompanying communications, see Coues's *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. I, pp. 232-239.

<sup>36</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, etc.* (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 25; see also Appendix to Part I, p. 8.

some for those poor fellows, who were killing themselves to obey my orders."<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, several days were spent in the erection of block-houses which should serve as a shelter for the sick and those who were otherwise unable to continue the journey. An abundance of game in the vicinity insured not only comfort for the men who were left behind but also "plenty of provision" for the return voyage.

In order to hasten progress, which was daily becoming more and more difficult on account of the rapid freezing of the river, the heavy boats were exchanged for canoes. These were constructed with no little trouble owing to the scarcity of tools, there being in the whole party "only two falling-axes and three hatchets". In spite of many hindrances three canoes were completed, but one sank when loaded with a large quantity of ammunition. In the process of drying this powder it exploded and nearly blew up "a tent and two or three men with it".<sup>38</sup>

Such misfortunes, combined with the "isolation and inactivity" of the region, cooled somewhat the ardor of the young commander. He confessed that he found himself "powerfully attacked with the fantastics of the brain, called ennui", and elsewhere adds the following:

It appears to me, that the wealth of nations would not induce me to remain secluded from the society of civilized mankind, surrounded by a savage and unproductive wilderness, without books or other sources of intellectual enjoyment, or being blessed with the cultivated and feeling mind, of a civilized fair.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, p. 246; Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>39</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and*

The freezing and thawing of the river made it impossible for the party to proceed with any degree of safety or rapidity. Accordingly, all but one canoe were abandoned early in December. Provisions and baggage were loaded on sleds, each drawn by two men abreast. The difficulties which beset this method of transportation are well illustrated in the following entry of December 26th: "Broke four sleds; broke into the river four times, and had four carrying places".<sup>40</sup> On many days the distance covered did not exceed three or four miles. Writing of his misfortunes, Lieutenant Pike said: "Never did I undergo more fatigue, in performing the duties of hunter, spy, guide, commanding officer, &c. Sometimes in front; sometimes in the rear; frequently in advance of my party 10 or 15 miles; that at night I was scarcely able to make my notes intelligible."<sup>41</sup>

Under such circumstances together with considerable discouragement among his men, Lieutenant Pike found it difficult to keep up his spirits. But as the weather became colder and the ice stronger, progress was much easier. As much as twenty miles a day were covered.

Early in January signs of Chippeway Indians were seen, from whom Lieutenant Pike had every reason to expect a demonstration of hostility. His fears, however, were soon relieved when four of these Indians presented themselves at his camp in company with an English trader who was located at a post on Sandy Lake. Mr. Grant, the English trader, accompanied Lieutenant Pike and his party to the

*through the Western Parts of Louisiana, etc.* (original edition, 1810), Part I, pp. 37, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, etc.* (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 55; Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 250, 251.

<sup>41</sup> Entry of December 23, 1805.—Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, etc.* (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 55.

British trading post, where they made their headquarters for several days.<sup>42</sup> Such a sojourn among the trading establishments of this region was altogether agreeable to Lieutenant Pike since one of the objects of his expedition was to investigate and report upon the trading posts of the upper Mississippi. On several occasions he was received in a most cordial and hospitable manner by the officials in charge of the various posts of the Northwest Company. His accounts of existing conditions are detailed and quite authentic. Aside from general observations on the trade, Lieutenant Pike's journal contains some interesting correspondence between himself and one of the traders, Hugh M'Gillis.

Under date of February, 1806, Lieutenant Pike sent a communication to Mr. M'Gillis,<sup>43</sup> which contained a frank discussion of the conditions existing among the trading posts and some pointed remarks on the relations between the Northwest Company and the government of the United States. He affirmed the right of the British to carry on trade with the Indians within the territory of the United States, but protested strongly against their exemption from "paying the duties, obtaining licenses, and subscribing unto all the rules and restrictions of our laws". It was estimated that the United States was annually defrauded of duties to the amount of \$26,000.<sup>44</sup> For the correction of this evil the establishment of a government custom house at the mouth of the St. Louis River was suggested.

<sup>42</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, pp. 56-58.

<sup>43</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part I, pp. 14-16.

<sup>44</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part I, p. 37.

In addition, Lieutenant Pike mentioned the fact that the savages were being alienated from our government by receiving at the hands of the traders British medals and flags. In conclusion, Lieutenant Pike expressed the opinion that, in case war should be declared between the United States and Great Britain, these establishments would serve as so many posts for the deposit of arms and ammunition. In spite of a certain bluntness, with no attempt to evade any real convictions on the subject under discussion, there is a tone of genuine courtesy.

In an equally courteous reply,<sup>45</sup> Mr. M'Gillis expressed his desire to pay the duty on goods imported by the Northwest Company if it could be done without conveying goods already received to the custom house at Mackinac. Owing to the fact that most of the year's supply of goods had already been received, such transportation would be a "vast expense and trouble".

With regard to the use of the posts as garrisons in time of war, Mr. M'Gillis was astonished to learn that the American government should have apprehended any such purpose. He explained that the establishments were for the security of property and life in a country exposed to the cruelty of many savages. "We never formed the smallest idea", he added, "that the said inclosures might ever be useful in the juncture of a rupture between the two powers, nor do we now conceive that such poor shifts will ever be employed by the British government, in a country overshadowed with wood, so adequate to every purpose. Forts might in a short period of time be built far superior to any stockades we may have occasion to erect."

<sup>45</sup> This letter bears the date of February 15, 1806, and appears in Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part I, pp. 17-19.

Although apparently unconscious of the error committed by exhibiting the flag of Great Britain in American territory, Mr. M'Gillis pledged himself to use his "utmost endeavors, as soon as possible, to prevent the future display of the British flag, or the presenting of medals, or the exhibiting to public view, any other mark of European power, throughout the extent of territory known to belong to the dominion of the United States". The communication is concluded with a high tribute to Lieutenant Pike's personal integrity and to the government which he represented.

On January 20th Lieutenant Pike resumed his journey toward the source of the Mississippi, reaching the junction of the waters of Leech Lake with the main channel of the river on the last day of the month. Instead of continuing in the direction of Lake Winnibigoshish, up what is now considered the main course of the river, Lieutenant Pike turned westward and made his way to Leech Lake, believing that he had accomplished the chief object of his expedition, and firmly convinced that this was the ultimate source of the great Father of Waters.<sup>46</sup>

The conclusion with respect to the Leech Lake system is not surprising since the idea was quite prevalent among the traders and Indian tribes of the region, from whom Lieutenant Pike obtained most of his information.

Other "true sources" have been found by subsequent travellers, and the last has gone a little beyond his precursors, and thus fancied himself entitled to the merit of being called the Bruce of the Mississippi. This may be; but it is probable that all have been right. It would be difficult to determine which branch of a large tree extends furthest from the parent root. It may be equally, or more so, to determine which of the many head branches of the Mississippi, that have been discovered, is the most remote from the

<sup>46</sup> Coues's *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. I, note, pp. 152, 153; *Pike's Explorations in Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. I, pp. 532, 533.

Gulf of Mexico; and the initial gush of its waters undoubtedly varies. A wet season may open many small tributaries to a small lake, which had no existence in a dry season. Hence the spring traveller, and the traveller of the summer solstice, may have different descriptions to give, and yet both be correct.<sup>47</sup>

It was on February 14th that Lieutenant Pike began preparations for the homeward journey. Two days later he held a council with some of the Chippeway Indians of the lake region. In a speech of considerable length Lieutenant Pike persuaded the Indians to give up most of their British medals and flags.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he urged the Chippeways to cease their hostilities with the Sioux, who had also promised to bury the hatchet. As a token of their promise the young American produced the pipe of Wabasha.<sup>49</sup> As a result of this council two of "the most celebrated warriors" accompanied the party to St. Louis, where Lieutenant Pike planned to have a council of peace with representatives of the various tribes in the Upper Mississippi Valley.

Amid "acclamations and shouts" on the part of the Indians, the party took their departure from Leech Lake on February 18th. Marching by land across wooded and marshy ground, they did not reach the Mississippi River until six days later.<sup>50</sup> Lieutenant Pike had long since

<sup>47</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 255, 256.

<sup>48</sup> In return for their British medals and flags, Lieutenant Pike pledged himself to send those of the United States to the savage chiefs, "but owing to the change of agents, and a variety of circumstances, it was never fulfilled". Recommendations were made, however, to General Wilkinson that such pledge be kept for the good of the government.— See Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Appendix to Part I, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> See above note 32.

<sup>50</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, pp. 71, 73.

learned that the only expeditious method of travel was by means of snow shoes. With the aid of these he was able to make the descent of the river in much less than half the time consumed in the ascent. But in spite of many advantages the task proved arduous enough, as the following entry in the journal will show:

The pressure of my racket strings brought the blood through my socks and mockinsons [moccasins], from which the pain I marched in may be imagined.<sup>51</sup>

On March 5th Lieutenant Pike found himself at the post where he had left the sergeant in charge of the sick. Much to his chagrin he found that, while he himself had been extremely frugal in the use of provisions in order that a goodly supply might be on hand for the downward journey, the sergeant in charge of the post had squandered nearly all of the provisions in his custody and had given away practically all of the whiskey, including a keg which the Lieutenant had for his own use.<sup>52</sup>

The party remained at the post until April 7th. Meanwhile several councils were held with some Menominee Indians in the immediate vicinity. Without any new or important experiences Lieutenant Pike continued the descent, arriving at the northern boundary of the present State of Iowa on April 16th. At noon on the following day he reached the camp of Wabasha where he remained all day and night in the hope of seeing the chief, who unfortunately remained out all night on a hunting trip.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup> Whiting's *Life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, published in Jared Sparks's *Library of American Biography*, Vol. XV, pp. 256, 257.

<sup>53</sup> Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*, etc. (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 99.

Leaving some powder and tobacco for him, Lieutenant Pike left in the morning for Prairie du Chien, which he reached at two o'clock in the afternoon. Here he received a hearty welcome, being presented with some much-needed supplies and treated in a most hospitable manner by the traders and Indians of the place. Moreover, he "received a great deal of news from the States and Europe, both civil and military"—a welcome bit of the civilization from which he had been isolated for so many months.

On the afternoon of April 20th Lieutenant Pike witnessed a most interesting game of "the cross" on the prairie "between the Sioux on the one side, and the Puants and Reynards on the other". He describes the game as follows:

The ball is made of some hard substance and covered with leather, the cross sticks are round and net work, with handles of three feet long. The parties being ready, and bets agreed upon, (sometimes to the amount of some thousand dollars) the goals are set up on the prairie at the distance of half a mile. The ball is thrown up in the middle, and each party strives to drive it to the opposite goal; and when either party gains the first rubber, which is driving it quick round the post, the ball is again taken to the center, the ground changed, and the contest renewed; and this is continued until one side gains four times, which decides the bet. It is an interesting sight to see two or three hundred naked savages contending on the plain who shall bear off the palm of victory; as he who drives the ball round the goal is much shouted at by his companions. It sometimes happens that one catches the ball in his racket, and depending on his speed endeavors to carry it to the goal, and when he finds himself too closely pursued, he hurls it with great force and dexterity to an amazing distance, where there are always flankers of both parties ready to receive it; it seldom touches the ground, but is sometimes kept in the air for hours before either party can gain the victory. In the game which I witnessed, the Sioux were victorious, more I believe, from the superiority of their skill in throwing the ball, than by their swiftness, for I thought the Puants and Reynards the swiftest runners.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Pike's *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and*

The remainder of the journey was uneventful. Numerous unimportant councils and meetings with various Indians took place, and in many cases British medals were given up. The account of the descent, however, is extremely meagre, there being almost no mention of the country through which the party passed. This is probably due to the increase in the distance covered on the return — only about two months being spent in the descent, while the ascent had occupied more than six months.

It was on April 30, 1806, that the party arrived at the town of St. Louis.<sup>55</sup> It would seem that there had not been a loss of a single man on the expedition, since a report<sup>56</sup> of the number of persons returned to St. Louis corresponds exactly to the number of the original party.

When his reports and observations were completed, Lieutenant Pike had accomplished far more than his orders. He had given to the public, as well as to the government officials, information which was not only new but especially accurate in details. This information covered every phase of the voyage, and included extended observations with regard to the climate, soil, drainage, timber, etc., of the country. The results of careful and painstaking investigation of the British trade brought many corrupt practices to light which resulted in preventatives on the part of the general government. Knowledge of the Indians — their tribes, numbers, and characteristics — was afforded by tables and charts carefully compiled and included in Lieutenant Pike's journal. Without doubt the efforts of Lieutenant Pike did much to create a friendly attitude to-

*through the Western Parts of Louisiana, etc.* (original edition, 1810), Part I, p. 100.

<sup>55</sup> The time consumed in the exploration was, therefore, eight months and twenty-two days.

<sup>56</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 10th Congress, Second Session, 1808-1809, p. 1794.

ward the United States on the part of the Indians of the Iowa and upper Mississippi regions. British medals and flags were replaced by the stars and stripes; hostilities among various tribes ceased; and there was a marked increase in the respect of the Indians for the American people.

Although Lieutenant Pike so far as possible carried out the orders of General Wilkinson as well as those of the government, there seems to be no record of any compensation<sup>57</sup> either to Lieutenant Pike or to any of his companions for their untiring efforts. At various times attempts were made in Congress to secure such compensation, but all such efforts were in vain. Committees were appointed, reports were heard, and the matter was even presented in the form of bills.<sup>58</sup> The measure, however, was successively defeated, even though it was always by a small majority.

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<sup>57</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 10th Congress, First Session, 1807-1808, Vol. II, pp. 1659, 1767; *Annals of Congress*, 10th Congress, Second Session, 1808-1809, pp. 486, 487, 862, 902, 1788, 1794; *Annals of Congress*, 11th Congress, 1809-1810, Part I, pp. 218, 263; *Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, First Session, 1811-1812, Part II, p. 1576.

<sup>58</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 10th Congress, First Session, 1807-1808, Vol. II, p. 1767; *Annals of Congress*, 10th Congress, Second Session, 1808-1809, pp. 862, 902; *Annals of Congress*, 11th Congress, Part I, pp. 218, 263.

On July 3, 1812, a petition from Lieutenant Pike asking compensation for services rendered in exploring the interior parts of North America was presented. But this was ordered to be laid on the table and it seems never to have been considered.—*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, First Session, 1811-1812, Part II, p. 1576.