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Zebulon Montgomery Pike

Pathfinder and Patriot

BY

HARVEY L. CARTER

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HARVEY L. CARTER

FOREWORD

This book is intended to serve two purposes. First, to make available a concise, reliable account of the life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike for those who wish to know about his interesting career. Secondly, to correct numerous erroneous statements and false impressions that have been made concerning him. It is hoped that no fresh errors have been committed but if so, the writer would be grateful to have them called to his attention. Chief reliance has been placed on the writings of Pike himself in the facts and interpretations here presented.

May 1, 1956

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I

SON OF A SOLDIER

When, in 1813, Brigadier General Zebulon Montgomery Pike was killed in battle at the age of thirty-four, he had achieved already an assured place in the history of his country. Few Americans have accomplished so much in such a brief span of public life. In the sesquicentennial year of his discovery of the famous peak which bears his name his place in history remains secure.

Pike's earliest American ancestor emigrated from England to Massachusetts in 1635. From there, a branch of the family moved to New Jersey, a movement paralleled by the paternal ancestors of Abraham Lincoln. His father, Zebulon Pike, was born in Woodbridge, New Jersey in 1751. He inherited a little land in Somerset county, and married Isabella Brown, of that county, in 1775. Their second child, Zebulon Montgomery Pike, was born January 5, 1779, in Lambertton, now Lamington, in Somerset county, New Jersey.

The father had entered the Revolutionary Army in 1776 as a private. His promotion to Captain occurred in 1778 and as the campaigning that year, prior to the battle of Monmouth, in which he engaged, was in that part of New Jersey, these events must have been the occasion of a visit home in the spring of that year.

After the Revolution, the Pike family moved to Bucks county, Pennsylvania and, a few years later, to Northumberland county in the same state. While living there in 1790, the father, having heard of the defeat of General Josiah Harmar by the Indians in the Northwest Territory, resumed his army career by enlisting for frontier service in the Pennsylvania militia. His pay as a Captain was \$35 a month, with a \$12 subsistence allowance. His company was ordered to Cincinnati in time to participate in Governor Arthur St. Clair's campaign. Captain Pike survived the disastrous defeat of this expedition by the Indians under the Miami chief, The Little Turtle, on November 4, 1791. There is evidence that he bore himself better than most officers during the rout.

When General Anthony Wayne was given the task of forming a "Legion" to quell the Indians, Captain Pike enlisted in this new branch of the regular army. As his pay was now \$1.83 per day, he was able to bring his family to Cincinnati. In the fall of 1794, both Captain Pike and his son, Zebulon Montgomery Pike, then fifteen

years old, were in this army, although it is not thought that either was present at the decisive victory over the Indians at Fallen Timbers on October 20, 1794.

General James Wilkinson was a severe critic of General Wayne, although serving under him. There is some reason to believe that the Pikes were of the Wilkinson faction. All criticism was stifled by the victory but Wilkinson and young Pike were to be inseparably connected in later years. Wayne's expedition was a training school for other young men, notably William Henry Harrison, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark. Harrison defeated the Indians at Tippecanoe in 1811 and, years later, in 1840 was elected President. One of his sons married Zebulon Montgomery Pike's daughter. Lewis and Clark were the leaders in the famous expedition of 1804-1805 which explored up the Missouri River and down the Columbia River to establish a claim of the United States to the Oregon country. Zebulon Montgomery Pike, too, became a famous explorer.

One of the officers in the elder Pike's company was Lieutenant Thomas T. Underwood, of Virginia. He kept a journal from 1792 to 1800. It contains some references to the Pikes which help to round out our knowledge of them during this period.

"Fort Greenville, 10th August, 1795. This morning Capt. Zebulon Pike, his two officers, his son Zebulon M. Pike and one hundred soldiers was ordered to Fort Massac to join in the troops at that place and to repair that Fort. I was also ordered with that command."

"Fort Massac, July 4th, 1796. This evening Major Pike, his son Zebulon M. Pike, Capt. Cribbs and two soldiers got in a small sailboat to cross the river, the wind was very high and after getting about 150 yards from our shore a blow of wind struck the sail and upset the boat, as they rose young Pike got hold of the harem of his father's head, and brought him safe to shore. The father often said to his son Z. M. Pike save yourself and let me goe. He observed to his father doe not take hold of me and I will take you safe to shore. Capt. Cribbs got shore, and the two soldiers were lost also the boat lost."

Fort Massac was on the Ohio River in what is now Illinois. At the time of this incident young Pike was seventeen. His display of courage, determination, and coolness in the face of danger was characteristic of him all through life. He was about five feet eight inches tall and not very robust. Nearly all his brothers and sisters were, sooner or later, victims of tuberculosis. He had little formal schooling but applied himself to the study of mathematics, French, and English while in the army. He was too fond of using words which he had heard or read but which he could not spell. Although bold and headstrong, he was ambitious to rise in his profession and he seems not to

have had any of the bad habits frequently associated with army life.

The Pikes, father and son, remained at Fort Massac for five years. In 1799 young Pike was advanced to Second Lieutenant and later to First Lieutenant. He had charge of supply for various frontier forts. During his trips on the Ohio River he visited a cousin, Clarissa Brown, daughter of a Kentucky planter, and they fell in love. Since Captain Brown opposed their marriage, the young couple eloped to Cincinnati in 1801. For a while he was stationed at Fort Washington, near Cincinnati.

In 1802 he was transferred to Fort Knox, Vincennes, Indiana. This old French settlement on the Wabash was the seat of government for the Indiana Territory. The Pikes were friendly with the territorial governor, William Henry Harrison. After Pike's death, his widow returned to Vincennes to live.

However, they were soon transferred to another old French town, Kaskaskia, in Illinois. Here they remained from 1803 to 1805. Lieutenant Pike was visited here by Lieutenant Meriwether Lewis, who was recruiting for the expedition that he and William Clark were soon to lead to the Pacific Northwest. Pike was not satisfied to be confined to frontier garrison duty and it was with pleasure that he received a summons to St. Louis which held the promise of an exploratory expedition of his own. The order came from General James Wilkinson, head of the army in the West and recently appointed governor of the Louisiana Territory, which had been purchased, in 1803, from France. Pike's career of adventure was about to begin.

NOTE ON THE EPISODE AT FORT MASSAC, JULY 4, 1796.

The Journal of Lieutenant Thomas T. Underwood is one of the manuscripts collected by that early enthusiast for frontier history, Lyman Copeland Draper, and is to be found in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison. The incident related, concerning Major Pike's life being saved by his son, is apparently unknown to other writers on the life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike. It is not only an interesting item of information but is valuable for the light which it throws on the character of Pike.

II

WINTER IN THE NORTH WOODS

No doubt inspired by the Federal Government's action in authorizing the Lewis and Clark expedition, General Wilkinson decided to send out an exploring party of his own to find the headwaters of the Mississippi river and to investigate the fur trade of that region. Always more capable in furthering his own private ambitions, through a multitude of schemes, than in serving his country, Wilkinson probably saw an opportunity to do both at one stroke. Obviously it was essential that the United States ascertain the boundaries of what it had recently purchased from France. This was the primary purpose of Lewis and Clark's journey and of both the expeditions to be headed by Lieutenant Pike. If the headwaters of the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Arkansas, and the Red Rivers could be found, the limits of the Louisiana Territory would be known.

Pike and his men had to undertake an arduous task as part of their regular army duty at the usual pay, whereas Lewis and Clark's venture received double pay by special act of Congress. But as Pike was more eager to have action and reputation than money, he readily accepted the command. With twenty men in a seventy foot keel boat, equipped at a cost of about \$2,000, but without either a surgeon or an interpreter, Pike embarked on his northern voyage on August 9, 1805. From the *Journal* which he kept, and later published, we are able to follow him on his exploration.

They had proceeded only to the present site of Davenport, Iowa when they met a Scottish trader, James Aird. Warning him that he was on the soil of the United States, they continued up the Mississippi to Julien Dubuque's lead mine, which they inspected. At Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin on September 4 they stopped to engage in friendly athletic contests with the Indians gathered there. On reaching Lake Pepin, a broad area in the river, Pike encountered another Scottish trader, Murdock Cameron. By September 21 the party reached the mouth of the Minnesota River, then called the St. Peters River. Just above were the Falls of St. Anthony. Here, today, are the modern cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, but at that time the site was occupied by a small village of Sioux Indians. With them, on September 23, Pike concluded a treaty whereby he purchased for the government a hundred thousand acres upon which Fort Snelling was later erected.

As they continued into the "Land of Lakes" the weather grew colder, so Pike constructed a stockade near the mouth of the Swan river. Here they stayed from October 28, when it was completed, to December 10, when Pike took eleven men and an interpreter he had hired at Prairie du Chien and went on to determine the source of the Mississippi. At Cedar Lake he encountered a British trader, Cuthbert Grant, among the Chippewa Indians. This part of the journey was accomplished on foot since the streams were frozen. The men pulled their provisions on sleds. On the eve of Pike's birthday, January 5, 1806, they lost some of their tents and clothing by fire. From another of Grant's posts on Sandy Lake, Pike journeyed to Leech Lake with Corporal Miller. This was generally considered the source of the Mississippi but they had followed a shorter tributary or fork. Here they found another trader, Hugh McGillis, with whom they stayed. On February 12, McGillis accompanied them to Lake Cass which Pike described as "the upper source of the Mississippi". Although he was now on the main stream, he would actually have had to follow it for twenty-five or thirty miles more to locate the true source.

From here he returned to his stockade where he found bad conditions due to the laxity of Sergeant Kennerman. On the return down the Mississippi they witnessed a ball game at Prairie du Chien between the Fox and Winnebago, on one side and the Sioux, on the other. The Sioux scored four goals in as many hours and won the game. The party arrived back in St. Louis on April 30, 1806.

The young lieutenant had fulfilled his instructions reasonably well. He had secured valuable land for the government. He had made notes concerning the various Indian tribes of the region, the Sioux, the Chippewa, the Sac and Fox, the Menominee. Some of his information was inaccurate but he had no opportunity for checking it. He had visited the posts of the British Northwest Company, caused the British flag to be lowered and the American flag to be raised in its place. In nine months he had made an extensive exploration and had gained confidence in his own abilities and hope for his future career.

This expedition, although less well known than Pike's later exploits, was quite important. With so small a party and under such difficult conditions of winter weather, it is hard to see how he could have done more. He had gained valuable experience in handling men under trying circumstances. He had achieved enough to cause him to decide to remain in the army. General Wilkinson was so well satisfied with the results that he immediately dispatched Pike on a trip of even greater magnitude into the Southwest.

President Jefferson referred to Pike's exploits in a complimentary way, along with those of Lewis and Clark, in his message to Con-

gress. For a young man with no particular advantages Zebulon Montgomery Pike had done well indeed. He was on the threshold of greater fame and greater achievement.

NOTE ON THE SOURCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

According to Pike's report, he considered both Leech Lake and Cass Lake to be the sources of what he took to be the lower and upper branches of the Mississippi. Neither was the true source but Pike's report was accepted by geographers until 1832. In that year, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft reported that Lake Itasca, some twenty five miles upstream from Cass Lake, was the true source. This is still generally accepted as fact, although it was subsequently established that Little Elk Lake, some five miles beyond Lake Itasca is the ultimate headspring of the great river.

Pike has been quite commonly derided by historians for his failure to establish the true source. The wonder is rather that he came as near to it as he did. There is still amazing inaccuracy on matters of this sort displayed by otherwise responsible authors. In his book, *The Jacksonians* (1954), Professor Leonard D. White, of the University of Chicago, says on page 495, "Meanwhile Captain Zebulon Pike had ascended the Mississippi River to its source in the Lake of the Woods, producing information that the President believed 'highly interesting in a political, geographical, and historical view.'" In the first eighteen words of his statement, Professor White makes five errors of fact, as follows: 1. Pike was a Lieutenant and not a Captain at the time. 2. It was Zebulon Montgomery Pike and not his father, Zebulon Pike, who led the expedition. 3. Pike did not ascend the Mississippi to its source. 4. Pike did not reach the Lake of the Woods. 5. The Mississippi does not have its source in the Lake of the Woods. The only truth in Professor White's statement is to be found in the words which he quotes from President Jefferson. If Professor White had consulted Pike's *Journal*, he, too, would have found highly interesting political, geographical, and historical information, and much more accurate information than that which he uses, despite the fact that Pike gathered it as long ago as 1806.

To avoid the necessity of referring again to Professor White's geographical misconceptions, reference may be made here to his next two sentences. "Pike also explored the Red River well into Spanish territory in what is now New Mexico." He then adds, "Long climbed the peak named in his honor." There are two errors of fact in each of these sentences, as follows: 1. Pike did not explore the Red River. 2. The Red River rises in Texas, not in New Mexico. 3. If it is meant that Long climbed Longs Peak, this is untrue because it was not climbed until 1868. 4. If it is meant that Long climbed Pikes Peak, this is untrue because it was climbed by Dr. Edwin James and two others of Long's party, not by Major Long himself.

III

OVER THE HIGH PLAINS TO PIKES PEAK

General Wilkinson, during the time of Lieutenant Pike's expedition up the Mississippi river, had become deeply involved in an intrigue with Aaron Burr, former Vice President of the United States. Popular belief holds them guilty of plotting treason against the United States. But it is possible that they only hoped to take advantage of an expected war with Spain by being the first to invade Spanish territory, and by winning speedy victory, to gain the applause and gratitude of their countrymen. At any rate, Burr, though subsequently put on trial, was acquitted despite the efforts of Wilkinson, who turned State's evidence. Many historians have held that Pike was a party to whatever Burr and Wilkinson were planning. It is clear that Pike's reputation has been the victim of guilt by association for there is no proof for the accusations which have been brought against him.

However, Wilkinson had already determined to send Pike to explore the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red rivers and to determine the extent of the Louisiana Territory in the region of the Southwest. Before he could do this, Wilkinson was himself ordered to New Orleans by President Jefferson to repel any Spanish attack from Texas. Wilkinson, therefore, sent by letter his instructions for the western expedition.

Thus Pike set out a second time from Fort Bellfountaine, near St. Louis, to begin a long journey. He started on July 15, 1806 with twenty-one men and an interpreter. Also in the party was Dr. John H. Robinson, who acted as a volunteer surgeon. They had in charge about fifty Osage Indians, who had been captured by other Indians and were being returned home. The party ascended the Missouri River, then ascended the Osage River, using two large boats. They were welcomed by the Osage and spent considerable time among them. However, they had some difficulties and did not succeed in greatly increasing the friendliness of this tribe for the United States.

Abandoning their boats on August 26, the party began to cross the Great Plains. To Pike, these plains appeared to be almost a desert. His route took him northwest to the Republican River, near the present Kansas-Nebraska border. Then he dropped back southwestward to the Arkansas River. This was Pawnee country. The Pawnees told him that a party of three hundred Spaniards had recently been among them but had returned up the Arkansas River. Spanish authorities

having heard in some manner of Pike's projected exploration, had sent this force to try to prevent him from continuing on it. With so small a force, in comparison to the Spaniards, Pike had difficulty in creating a favorable impression among the Pawnees.

When Pike reached the Arkansas River, near what is now Larned, Kansas, he divided his party according to a pre-arranged plan. Lieutenant Wilkinson, son of the general, took five men and descended the Arkansas river to its junction with the Mississippi. Lieutenant Pike, with Dr. Robinson and fourteen men, one, Kennerman, having deserted, prepared to ascend the Arkansas to its source and to return by way of the Red River. The two parties separated on October 28.

Pike's party consisted of the following men, in addition to himself and the doctor: Brown, Carter, Dougherty, Gorden, Jackson, Meek, Menaugh, Miller, Mountjoy, Roy, Smith, Sparks, Stoute, and the interpreter, Vasquez. All except Smith, Vasquez and Dr. Robinson had been with Pike on his previous expedition up the Mississippi.

Buffalo and all kinds of game were abundant. East of present Dodge City, Kansas, large numbers of wild horses were encountered for the first time, but they could not succeed in capturing any of them. Pike was, at this time, traversing what later became famous as the Santa Fe Trail. On November 11, the party entered what would now be the state of Colorado and encamped near present day Holly, Colorado.

On November 15, when four miles east of what is now Las Animas, Colorado, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Pike thought that he could distinguish a mountain, to the right, which appeared like a small blue cloud. He viewed it with his spy glass and was still more confirmed in the conjecture, yet only communicated his discovery to Dr. Robinson. "In half an hour they appeared in full view before us," he wrote in his *Journal*, "When our party arrived on the hill they with one accord gave three cheers to the Mexican mountains." That evening camp was made at the junction of the Purgatoire River with the Arkansas River, which they were following.

The "small blue cloud", since it appeared on the right, could only have been Pikes Peak. Thus was this famous landmark first seen by an American and the first to discern it, on the horizon, was Zebulon Montgomery Pike. But Pike was no experienced plainsman; he had no idea how far he was from the mountains, nor did he learn to judge more accurately until he was considerably more experienced in mountain travel. One week, during which they had an encounter with a wandering Pawnee war party, brought them to the present site of Pueblo. From there, Pike determined to endeavor to climb the Peak he had discovered.

First he had his men cut fourteen logs, of which they constructed a breastwork five feet high on three sides, with the side nearest the Arkansas River being left open. This little stockade was erected at the confluence of Fountain Creek with the Arkansas but, when Major Long's exploring party visited the spot in 1820, no trace of it could be found. This construction was accomplished on the forenoon of Monday, November 24, 1806. Pike then took Dr. Robinson and two privates, Miller and Brown and set out with the intention of reaching the foot of "the Blue Mountain", as he called the Peak which now bears his name. They marched twelve miles that afternoon without seeming to be much nearer to the Peak, so they made camp for the night. Next day they started early, hoping to climb the mountain but, after walking twenty-two miles, made camp again, having killed two buffaloes.

On Wednesday, November 26, they left their blankets and food and again set out, expecting to climb the Peak and return, but were forced, after a rocky climb, to spend the night in a cave. It snowed that day, to add to their difficulties. Next morning, on Thursday, November 27, they climbed for about an hour to "the summit of the chain" through snow "middle deep." From this point they saw, Pike says in his *Journal*, "the Grand Peak once more." He stated that it "now appeared at the distance of 15 or 16 miles from us, and as high again as that we had ascended; it would have taken us a whole day's march to have arrived at its base when I believe no human being could have ascended to its pinical."

From this it will be apparent that Pike did not say, when he gave up the attempt to climb the Peak, that it would never be climbed. He merely said that he and his men could not accomplish the feat under the conditions which they faced that day and that, in his opinion, no others could have done so either. The significant word is the "when" that he uses, which can only refer to the moment of arriving at the base of the mountain after traversing the estimated fifteen miles (actually about twelve) through snow "middle deep." He was quite right in assuming that, when that had been done, neither his party nor any other would have been able to continue to the top. His men were clad in light overalls, had no socks, no food and no blankets, had killed no game and had seen none that day. The temperature was at 23 degrees Fahrenheit at the altitude they had then reached. Pike unquestionably did the sensible thing in deciding to abandon the attempt to climb the mountain which interested him so much.

Popular opinion generally holds that the spot on the "summit of the chain", from which Pike again found the peak visible, was

Cheyenne Mountain and many writers have made this statement. No person who is familiar with the topography of the area and who has studied Pike's own map showing this side trip can believe that Cheyenne Mountain was the spot reached by Pike. It was clearly some point on the range south of Cheyenne Mountain, between Little Fountain Creek and Turkey Creek, but nearer to the latter. They could not have climbed only one hour from their position near Turkey Creek and have reached the top of Cheyenne Mountain. The argument is clinched by Pike's mention of their return down "a long deep ravine with much less declivity than contemplated", and by his map which shows their return straight down Turkey Creek for several miles before cutting across to their camp site where the rest of the party awaited them.

On November 30 the party continued up the Arkansas for fifteen miles in a snow storm. They remained in camp on December 1, but next day they went thirteen miles farther in the coldest weather they had yet experienced. On December 3, Pike and Robinson endeavored to take the altitude of "the North Mountain" which, by reason of their location directly to the south of it, Pike now called his Peak. The altitude he recorded for it was 18,581 feet; its actual height, as we now know is 14,110 feet. However, when it is considered that he estimated the elevation from which he was working at 8,000 feet, when it was actually about 5,000 feet, the error is not so great as it seems. In 1820 the Long expedition underestimated the altitude of Pikes Peak nearly as much as Pike overestimated it.

Pike says of the Peak, "Indeed it was so remarkable as to be known to all the savage nation for hundreds of miles around and to be spoken of with admiration by the Spaniards of New Mexico, and was the bounds of their travels northwest. Indeed in our whole wandering in the mountains, it was never out of sight (except when in a valley) from the 14th of November to the 27th of January."

It should be stressed that Pike did not name the Peak for himself. On one map he calls it "Highest Mountain", which it appeared to be but was not. In his *Journal* he calls it "the Blue Mountain" and "the Grand Peak." It was named James Peak by Major Long in 1820 for Dr. Edwin James who, with two others, was the first to climb it on July 15 of that year. From 1820 to about 1850 it was called both James Peak and Pikes Peak. The fact that John C. Frémont, in his widely popular reports of his own explorations, called it Pikes Peak seems to have settled that name in common usage. It became more firmly established in popular reference during the Pikes Peak gold rush of 1859.

There will be few who will deny that Pike deserves the honor of having had his name bestowed on the mountain. Although no

statue of Pike has been erected in the region of the Peak, he has, in the mountain itself, the most enduring monument of all. It is the best known and most visited mountain in the United States. In the view from the plains to the east, from which Pike first sighted it, few can fail to be impressed by it, even as he was in 1806.

NOTE ON THE POINT OF PIKE'S NEAREST APPROACH TO THE PEAK.

Elliot Coues in his edition of Pike's *Journal*, published in 1895, thought it improbable that Pike was on top of Cheyenne Mountain. Professor Archer B. Hulbert of Colorado College, in his edition of the *Journal*, published in 1932, reproduced Pike's own sketch of his trip from his Pueblo stockade toward the mountain. Hulbert definitely proved, by means of this map, that it was impossible for Pike to have been on Cheyenne Mountain. Unfortunately, later authors have not always seen fit to follow Hulbert. Thus, Professor W. Eugene Hollon, of the University of Texas, in his excellent biography, *The Lost Pathfinder: Zebulon M. Pike*, published in 1949, placed Pike atop Cheyenne Mountain, from which eminence, he imagined Pike gazing on the future site of Colorado Springs. Professor Hollon lacked the advantage of the on the spot knowledge possessed by Professor Hulbert. In his book, *The Burr Conspiracy*, published in 1954, Professor Thomas P. Abernethy, of the University of Virginia, says that "Pike reached the summit of Cheyenne Mountain." Both Hollon and Abernethy refer to the temperature as being below zero. Pike recorded the temperature at the time as being 4 degrees below zero on his Reaumur thermometer, which would be 23 degrees above zero on the Fahrenheit scale. Both of these authors have failed to make the necessary conversion from Reaumur to Fahrenheit readings.

Pike was actually on one of two probable locations several miles south of Cheyenne Mountain. He was either on Blue Mountain or on a neighboring point which Dr. Lloyd Shaw named Mount Miller, in honor of one of Pike's soldiers, who accompanied him. The argument in favor of Mount Miller is that Pikes Peak can be seen from its summit. The argument in favor of Blue Mountain is that it most nearly corresponds to the location shown on Pike's map. However, Pikes Peak cannot be seen from the top of Blue Mountain because Mount Almagre obscures it. Professor Carroll B. Malone, of Colorado College, has advanced the theory that Pike, having been out of sight of the Peak, mistook snow covered Mount Almagre for it when he reached the top of Blue Mountain. This is not impossible; it is, in fact, a plausible explanation. It was put forward by Professor Malone after he had climbed Blue Mountain. The only certain way in which the exact spot attained by Pike and his three companions could be determined beyond any doubt would be by the discovery of some imperishable object which they had accidentally left behind and which could be identified as having belonged to them, such as a metal button from a uniform or a coin dating prior to 1806. Since such a find is utterly unlikely, it seems probable that the exact spot will never be determined. As the spot is difficult of access and would seldom be visited, even if it were precisely known, it is no very great tragedy that it cannot be located.

IV

LOST IN THE ROCKIES

On December 3, 1806, Pike and his men were encamped between present day Pueblo and Cañon City, Colorado. Next day they continued on to the site of Cañon City and found the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River. They explored only a slight distance into the Royal Gorge, and Pike made the mistake of thinking that the main stream could not possibly issue from such a narrow canyon. He was certain that they had reached the headwaters of the Arkansas river and that it was formed by several small tributaries. The party had also lost the trail of the Spanish column which they had been following. After scouting around for a time, Pike decided to follow Oil Creek to the northward, although his reason for this decision is not very clear.

Traversing rough country in which they lost a horse, they came on December 13 to a river "forty yards wide" which flowed in a northeast direction. Pike correctly conjectured that this river must be the Platte. From his description, it is evident that they were near the South Platte at the point where it emerges from South Park and enters Eleven Mile Canyon.

The party followed this river across South Park. They observed old Indian camps but saw no Indians. There was evidence that these Indians had many horses so it is probable that they were Comanches and Kiowas who had been there on a hunting expedition. Being at a loss to know which way to go, Pike climbed to a point from which he could make an observation of the country. To the north he noted what he described as "a very low pass." This was Hoosier Pass, which is actually about 11,500 feet high and only appears low because of the many 14,000 foot peaks in its vicinity. This pass is over the Continental Divide. To the southwest he noted another pass which he decided to follow. This was the Trout Creek Pass, which is followed by the present U. S. Highway 24, and which brought them back once more to the Arkansas River. However, Pike mistook the stream for the Red River for which he was also directed to look. On December 20, they encamped a little south of what is now Buena Vista, Colorado.

Pike now sent most of his men down the river but took with himself Miller and Mountjoy to explore upstream. They ascended to a point above present Granite, Colorado, in the neighborhood of

the Twin Lakes on the Lake Fork of the Arkansas. Pike was satisfied that he was near the origins of the river for he could see where it descended from the steep slopes of high mountains to the north and west. Again he was looking on the Continental Divide, this time toward Tennessee Pass beyond the present city of Leadville. Later, when preparing his *Journal* for publication, he fancied that beyond the divide might lie the headwaters of the Yellowstone, of which he had heard rumors.

His small party now descended and rejoined the larger group on December 23. The rest had been unable to kill any game but next day they killed four buffaloes which constituted their Christmas dinner. Christmas day, being cold and stormy, they spent it in camp a few miles north of present day Salida, Colorado.

Bad as their situation was, it was to get still worse. For now they followed the Arkansas through its canyon between Salida and Cañon City. Pike noted the absence of any Indian trail or sign of horses here and concluded that they must pass over the mountains to the south. Had he himself done this, by what is now Poncha Pass, he would have saved his men much suffering for they eventually went south by a more difficult route. But he was not sure where he was. On December 31, he became doubtful whether he was on the Red River as he had believed and, on January 5, 1807, he became certain that it was the Arkansas which they were following, because they came to the upper end of the Royal Gorge. January 5 was Pike's birthday, which fact he noted in his *Journal*, saying "most fervently did I hope never to pass another so miserably."

Miserable they had been, for they had lost more of their pack horses, the men having had to pull a loaded sled on the ice of the river. Game was scarce and they had been short of food all through the canyon. It was cold and their wet clothing was often frozen. Though they were temporarily out of danger of starvation, for they now killed several deer, they were about to encounter more and greater hardships.

For Pike was disappointed at not having found the Red River and determined to do so. Leaving part of the baggage, the horses, and two men, Smith and Vasquez, the interpreter, at the Cañon City camp in a stockade which they built, Pike led the other eleven men southward up Grape Creek. Starting on January 14, they each carried about seventy pounds, including their guns and ammunition. This route led them into the Wet Mountain Valley, where they nearly starved and where Sparks and Dougherty had their feet so badly frozen that they had to be left behind on January 22. Pike and Dr. Robinson, whose feet were in the best condition, had hunted

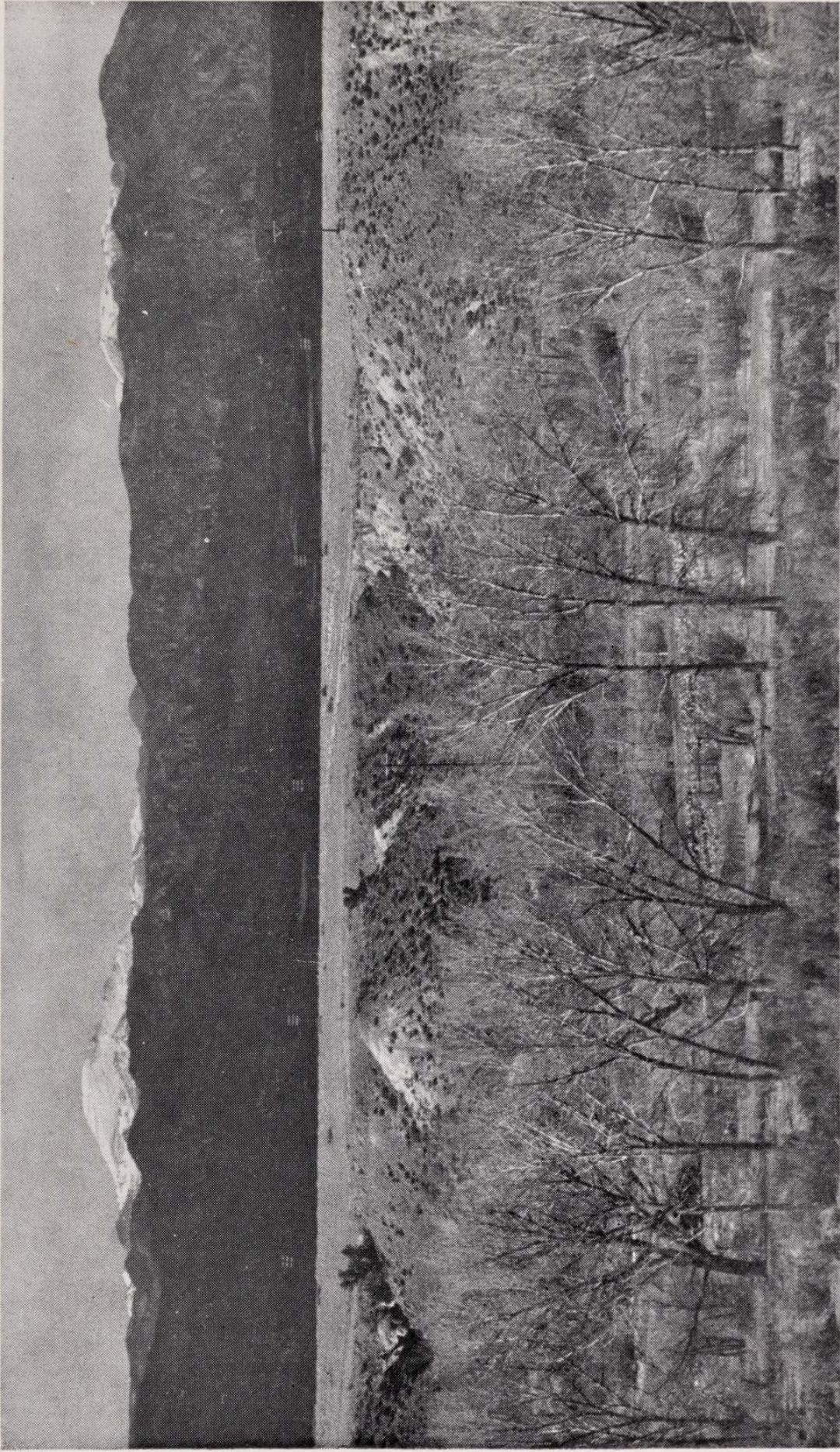
with no success and spent some time separated from the rest rather than return empty handed. But fortunately they had at least killed a buffalo, most of which they left with Sparks and Dougherty.

The remainder pushed on over the divide between Grape Creek and the upper reaches of the Huerfano river. They were almost at the limit of their endurance, Pike himself being discouraged. One of the men, Brown, complained "that it was more than human nature could bear, to march three days without sustenance, through snows three feet deep, and carry burthens only fit for horses, etc." Pike did not reprimand him till after they had killed a buffalo and feasted on it later in the day. This was the only instance of any complaint on the whole expedition.

Finally, on January 27, they crossed the rugged Sangre de Cristo Range which walled them in and which Pike referred to as "the Great White Mountain." But they had to leave still another man behind, Menaugh, who "was froze & gave oute." They crossed by the Medano or Sand Hill pass, which brought them out on the great sand hills overlooking the San Luis valley. With his glass Pike located a large river coming out of the mountains to the west and flowing southeast which he took to be the Red River for which he was searching. On January 30 they reached this river, actually the Rio Grande del Norte, near what is now the city of Alamosa, Colorado. Next day they went downstream to the junction with the Conejos River. Here they crossed and went five miles up the Conejos before they found timber from which they could build a stockade.

This stockade was "36 feet square. Heavy cottonwood logs, about two feet in diameter were laid up all round about six feet; after which lighter ones, until we made it 12 feet in height . . . we then dug a small ditch on the inside all round . . . Lastly, we dug a ditch round the whole, four feet wide, and let the water in all round." Here Pike felt that half of his party could defend themselves against possible Indian attack while the other half returned to bring in the men who had been left behind. They hunted and recuperated from their hardships until February 7. On that date, Pike sent five volunteers back over the Sangre de Cristo range for the stragglers and sent Dr. Robinson off to try to find his way to Santa Fe, since Pike had a commission to collect money for a Kaskaskia merchant from a French trader named LaLande who had gone to Santa Fe and had never returned.

It is more than likely that Pike realized, at last, his desperate situation, having left five men behind in three separate places, and having brought those with him through in poor condition from the hardships they had suffered. Even in their stockade on the Conejos



(Courtesy of Mr. Calvin Lamb)

PIKES PEAK FROM THE SOUTH BANK OF THE ARKANSAS RIVER, NEAR FLORENCE, COLORADO

Pike and his party passed the point from which this photograph was taken on December 5, 1806. Two days earlier he had endeavored to compute the elevation of the Peak. It will be observed that, had Pike persisted in his effort to ascend the Peak from the southeast, on November 27, 1806, he would have had to traverse the entire sky line shown here, including Mt. Almagre.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Z. M. Pike". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the portrait. It features elaborate flourishes, particularly a large loop under the "P" and another under the "K".

(Courtesy of Mrs. Dorothy P. Wing)

PORTRAIT OF ZEBULON MONTGOMERY PIKE BY REMBRANDT PEALE

This is the only authentic likeness of Pike made from life. The original painting is in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Comparison may be made with the Centennial Medallion of 1906, reproduced on the front cover, and with a recent painting by Mr. Tom Reany, of Colorado Springs.



(Courtesy of Dr. Carroll B. Malone)

PIKE'S MAP OF HIS EXCURSION TOWARD PIKES PEAK

Starting from his stockade at Pueblo (lower right,) Pike's route is clearly shown by dotted lines. Comparison with a modern map should be made. Rock Creek and Little Fountain Creek (upper left) are clearly identifiable. The course toward the Peak was in a direct line. The return was down Little Turkey Creek. The Historical Society of the Pikes Peak Region has placed a marker near the place where Pike's route crossed the modern highway between Colorado Springs and Canon City.



(Courtesy of Dr. Norma Peterson)

PIKE'S STOCKADE ON THE CONEJOS RIVER NEAR ALAMOSA, COLORADO

Pike's stockade was constructed during the first two weeks of February, 1807. It was reconstructed by an appropriation act of the Colorado State Legislature, passed in 1925. The park in which the reconstruction stands is under the supervision of the State Historical Society of Colorado. Pike's sword is also in the possession of this Society at its quarters in Denver.

they were not well lodged and they often had to hunt five miles away and carry the meat from that distance. He probably hoped that the Spanish in Santa Fe would give them supplies and set them on their way home. If not, he was prepared to be captured rather than run the risk of losing the lives of his men in this dangerous situation. He was not certain where he was, though he supposed he was on the Red River. His uncertainty as to his location, coupled with his certainty of their lack of supplies, poor condition, and faltering morale was enough to cause him to seek aid from the nearest source, even though, for all he knew, Spain and the United States might be at war.

There is no reason to think that he knew he had found the Rio Grande rather than the Red River for no one knew the source of the Red River at that time; not even the Spaniards knew it with accuracy. The map prepared by Humboldt, which Pike had seen and which he may have had with him, placed the source of the Red River somewhere close to Santa Fe.

Nor is there any reason to suppose that he had deliberately established himself on Spanish soil in order to act as a spy of General James Wilkinson and Aaron Burr in whatever schemes they may have had. There is nothing in General Wilkinson's written orders to Lieutenant Pike to support this charge, which has been made by many writers ever since 1807. If there was any written evidence, it was in the papers taken from Pike by the Spaniards. All but two of these have been recovered, and nothing has been found in these papers to support the theory that Pike was a spy.

Those who believe he was a spy must, therefore, invent the hypothesis that Pike had additional verbal orders from Wilkinson. This, of course, cannot be proved, and a man ought to stand as innocent until proved guilty. It is equally hard to believe that Pike was unwittingly being used by Wilkinson for this purpose, though it is possible that Dr. Robinson was attached to Pike's party by General Wilkinson with some such motive. Again, there is no proof, although Dr. Robinson subsequently fought with the Mexicans in their revolution against Spain. Even the Spanish authorities could find no proof that Pike was a spy, much as they wished to believe that this was the case.

It is also against Pike's character to assume that he was a spy or a party to any scheme of Wilkinson's. He was loyal to Wilkinson simply because the General was his superior officer and because he had given him the command of two expeditions. Anyone who reads Pike's letters and journals will find enough of his character revealed therein to render absurd the notion that he was anything but a young, open, and straight-forward soldier. When all other information is lacking we must judge on character and Pike's character stands the test.

Nor is it surprising that Pike did not busy himself with preparing for a prompt return down what he thought was the Red River for, on February 16, the party returned with Menaugh but Sparks and Dougherty had been unable to walk, and sent bones from their frozen feet to show their disability. They were carried in later on. On that same day, two Spanish soldiers were encountered and, after an exchange of courtesies, departed. After this meeting it was certain that other Spaniards would come to investigate.

On February 19, two men, Meek and Miller, volunteered to go back to the Cañon City stockade to fetch the two men who had remained there. While they were away, on February 26, the Spaniards appeared, one hundred strong. On being told by them that he was not on the Red River, Pike ordered the American flag to be lowered and agreed to be conducted to Santa Fe. Part of the Spanish force remained to bring the rest of Pike's men when they should arrive. Jackson and Carter remained with them to await the return of Meek, Miller, Smith, and Vasquez who were bringing in Sparks and Dougherty. Pike, with Brown, Gordon, Menaugh, Mountjoy, Roy and Stoute was escorted to Santa Fe by the Spaniards at once.

NOTE ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF PIKE'S HAVING BEEN LOST.

There can be little doubt that Pike was lost. He had been lost before when he thought he was on the Red River but later recognized that he was on the Arkansas. In this case, Pike wrote the name of the Red River on his maps, correcting the mistake by striking out Red and writing Arkansas in its place when he recognized his error. His maps of the Rio Grande show that he labelled it the Red River but no corrections were ever made because he did not realize his error until the Spaniards told him of it and they soon relieved him of his maps and papers.

It is not remarkable that Pike was lost since some notable historians have been lost more hopelessly than he was while merely attempting to describe where he had been. For example, John Bach McMaster in his *History of the People of the United States*, published in 1892, says in Volume III, page 144, "Pushing up the Arkansas to a point near Denver, he measured the height of the peak that now bears his name, crossed the mountains, crossed the Platte, came to the Bighorn, explored the sources of the Arkansas and began a vain search for the Red." The errors are 1. Denver is on the South Platte, not on the Arkansas 2. Pike was never near Denver 3. Pike was never on the Bighorn, which is a tributary of the Yellowstone, in Wyoming and Montana 4. To say that Pike "crossed the mountains" says nothing, for there are mountains all over the portion of Colorado that Pike explored during the winter of 1806-07.

Thomas P. Abernethy in *The Burr Conspiracy*, published in 1954, devotes a chapter to Pike's expedition which he punningly entitles "Pike's Peek." The implication is, of course, that Pike was a spy for Burr and Wilkinson, and that he was sent out by the latter to take a "peek" at the Spanish province

of New Mexico. If puns have any place in an historical narrative, a more appropriate one could be made by referring to "Pike's Pique," for surely an honest and patriotic soldier, such as Pike, would have every right to be piqued at those who insist on casting him in the role of villain and spy. Professor Abernethy says, on page 129, referring to Pike's arrival at the Rio Grande, "he certainly knew that it was not the Red. If he had Humboldt's map, he knew very well what river he was on." But on, page 128, he says that Pike "reached the Royal Gorge of the Colorado on 5 December." From this it will be seen that Zebulon Pike is not the only man who ever mistook one river for another, since the Royal Gorge is a canyon of the Arkansas river and not of the Colorado river. In this connection, it will be recalled that Christopher Columbus, on his discovery of America, thought he was in India or therabouts. On the whole, there would seem to be more reason for explorers to fall into such errors than for historians to do so.

The same author, on page 135, says that Pike's men knew, when they crossed the "Sierra Mountains" in February, that they were in Spanish territory. Pike's crossing of the Sangre de Cristo Range was on January 27, so this reference is so vague as to time and place as to be worth very little. However, if it refers, as must be supposed, to Meek and Miller's bringing Sparks, Dougherty, Smith, and Vasquez over the Sangre de Cristo mountains, then it has no value at all because the first contact with the Spaniards had been made on February 16 and Meek and Miller did not go back for the others until February 19. Consequently they were fully aware of the first visit of Spanish soldiers and would have revised their opinions as to the location of the Conejos stockade on the basis of this information.

Professor Abernethy gives as his reason for believing that Pike knew where he was the fact that he did not take the obvious plains route to the Red River. There was no obvious route to the Red River in 1807, since no one knew where it rose. Pike was the first American to try to find its upper course. Its source was not determined until 1852 by the Marcy expedition. Major Long's expedition in 1820 endeavored to get on the Red River by the "obvious" plains route and got on the Canadian River instead.

Professor Abernethy also quotes Wilkinson's order to Pike, "As your interview with the Comanches will probably lead you to the head branches of the Arkansas, and Red rivers you may find yourself approximated to the settlement of New Mexico & therefore it will be necessary you should move with great circumspection, to keep clear of any hunting or reconnoitering parties from that Province, and to prevent alarm or offense, because the affairs of Spain and the United States appear to be on the point of amicable adjustment. . . ." He then observes "Thus the lieutenant was given orders to invade Spanish territory. . . ."

It is impossible to see an order of invasion in these words; in fact, Pike was clearly ordered not to invade Spanish territory. He was told that if he found he was near to the Spanish territory he should be very careful not to start a fight, if he met any Spanish reconnoitering parties. Professor Abernethy is here following the theory advanced by Elliot Coues, in 1895, when he spoke of Pike's party as "a reconnaissance in force." It should be fairly clear that Pike's sixteen men did not constitute an invading force. Elliot Coues edition of Pike's *Journal* was superseded by that of Hulbert in 1932, but Professor Abernethy does not list Hulbert's work in his bibliography. Hulbert

demolished the spy theory of Pike's activities with great thoroughness, using Pike's own maps as supporting evidence.

Wilkinson's order merely shows the lack of geographical knowledge which it was Pike's mission to clarify. It shows that it was thought that the Arkansas and the Red Rivers arose near one another and that both were on the borders of Spain and the United States according to the accepted notion of the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase.

No one, who is in the least way familiar with the topography of the Colorado Rockies, is likely to have any difficulty in readily accepting Pike's statement that he did not know where he was. President Jefferson writing to Alexander von Humboldt on December 6, 1813 said, "Lieutenant Pike's orders were accordingly strictly confined to the waters of the Red River, and from his known observance of orders, I am persuaded that it must have been, as he himself declares, by missing his way that he got on the waters of the Rio Norte, instead of those of the Red River." It should be remembered that Jefferson caused the arrest and prosecution of Aaron Burr, and was convinced that Burr was a conspirator. If Jefferson saw no reason to connect Pike with that conspiracy, it should be fairly decisive in determining that Pike had no connection with it.

Those who assume that Pike was a Burr-Wilkinson agent, with secret or verbal orders to get himself captured on Spanish soil in order to act as a spy, seem not to have considered the following pertinent questions.

Why did Wilkinson first dispatch Pike to explore the Upper Mississippi, since he and Burr were already deep in their plans at that time?

Why did Wilkinson choose Pike, who had no knowledge of Spanish, for such a mission; also, why did Pike leave his interpreter behind when he crossed the Sangre de Cristos?

Why did Pike turn north to explore Pikes Peak and later turn north again for a two month exploration in mid-winter, instead of turning south in November when he reached Pueblo?

Finally, why did Pike hasten to publish an account of his exploration, if he had anything to conceal concerning his actions in connection therewith?

The answers to these questions clearly indicate that the purpose of Pike's expedition was one of exploration.

V

SPANISH INTERLUDE

Pike, with six of his men, was now conducted to Santa Fe. They passed through the villages of San Juan and Santa Cruz. At San Juan they encountered the French trader, LaLande, whom Morrison, the Kaskaskia merchant, had wished them to find in order to collect his bill. On arrival in Santa Fe, they were escorted to the governor's palace for questioning. Pike was ashamed of their appearance, which he described in this manner, "I was dressed in a pair of blue trousers, mockinsons, blanket coat, and a cap made of scarlet cloth lined with fox skin; my poor fellows were in leggins, breech cloths, and leather coats." They had worn out their shoes and had replaced them with moccasins of their own manufacture, and had improvised other clothing. The Spanish authorities gave them some new clothing before sending them on.

Governor Alencaster questioned Pike and demanded to see his papers. Pike had anticipated this, and had distributed the most valuable papers among his six men. Since Alencaster did not seem much interested in the papers remaining in Pike's trunk, Pike, after the first interview, took back the papers from his men, and placed them in his trunk. Then the governor, at the next interview, confiscated the trunk and its contents. However, one of Pike's men, and we do not know which one, had already got on the outside of some wine which had been offered him by the generous ladies of Santa Fe, and had started out to see the town. He happened to be the one to whom Pike's *Journal* had been entrusted. It was thus by the merest accident that the *Journal* was saved from falling into the hands of the Spaniards with the rest of Pike's documents.

When the governor asked whether Dr. Robinson was a member of his party, Pike denied it. Pike did not know what had been done with Robinson, nor did he know what his fate might be. He lied, hoping to save Robinson, who was a civilian. But since Dr. Robinson had already told the governor that he was a member of the party, Pike's denial made a very bad impression. Pike defended his incursion into Spanish territory, accidental as it was, by saying it was no greater violation of national boundaries than the Spanish expedition into Kansas under Lieutenant Malgares. Governor Alencaster decided that Pike and his men would have to be interrogated by higher authority. Pike was told that they would be taken to Chihuahua.

While in Santa Fe, Pike encountered two Americans. One was Solomon Colley, a survivor of the Nolan expedition into Texas in 1800. Philip Nolan had gone there to capture wild horses. In 1801, deep in the heart of Texas, he had been attacked by the Spanish and killed. There were nine survivors, one of whom was executed by order of the King of Spain. Pike later met two others of this group in Chihuahua, one a negro and the other a former soldier, who had served under Pike's father. Solomon Colley was used as an interpreter between Pike and Alencaster.

The other American was a Kentuckian named James Pursley or Purcell. This man had been hunting with some Comanche and Kiowa Indians in the South Park of Colorado. Since Pike had recently explored that region, they conversed about it and Pursley indicated that he believed there were gold bearing streams there. This was later proved to be true but not until the Pikes Peak Gold Rush of 1859-1860. Concerning Pursley, evidently a frontiersman of the solitary type, very little is known. Pike repeated Pursley's story as Pursley told it to him and paid honor to him as the first American to penetrate the wilds of Louisiana territory. Pursley was not able to get away from Santa Fe as he wished. He was detained there until 1824.

Chihuahua lay five hundred and fifty miles to the south of Santa Fe. Pike and his men started for this destination, under escort, on March 4. When they reached Albuquerque, Dr. Robinson was added to the party, much to Pike's satisfaction. At San Fernandez, a little south of Albuquerque, they were given in charge of Lieutenant Malgares, who had invaded Louisiana territory in search of Pike in the previous year. He was good company and he and Pike became good friends.

They proceeded in leisurely fashion, and were entertained by feasting, dancing, and cock fighting in the villages where they stopped. The priests were hospitable with wine and often endeavored to convert Pike to their religion. They reached El Paso del Norte on March 21 and remained there for three days. Here Pike saw Apache Indians for the first time. He was impressed by their proud and independent bearing.

From El Paso to Chihuahua they traveled more rapidly, covering two hundred and thirty miles in nine days. They arrived on April 2, having been nearly a month on the way from Santa Fe. Governor Salcedo, who had once been the Spanish governor of Louisiana, now examined Pike. Salcedo believed that Pike was a spy of the American government but after taking time to have Pike's papers translated, he decided to return the party to the United States with a protest, but to keep the papers. James Madison, Secretary of State, denied that Pike was a spy in response to the Spanish protest.

While in Chihuahua, Pike interviewed an American who gave his name as Martin Henderson and told a story of having been captured by Osage Indians and having subsequently made his way to San Antonio. Governor Salcedo suspected that this man might have been a deserter from Pike's party. Pike suspected that he might be an agent of Aaron Burr's and considered whether he ought not to denounce him as such to the governor. However, Pike's men learned that he was actually a murderer by the name of Trainer. On learning this the Spanish authorities promised to imprison him.

Pike was told by the Spanish authorities not to make any notes concerning the country through which he was being conducted. This instruction he systematically disobeyed. He wrote down his observations and secreted them in the gun barrels of his men. He not only recorded his observations but also any information which came his way concerning the provinces of Mexico which he had not visited. It was thus that he was able to publish not only his *Journal* but also much information on the geography, people, customs, natural resources, and government of the Spanish provinces, which was highly valuable, as it was the first account of these matters to be published in English.

Lieutenant Malgares escorted the party of eight Americans across Texas by way of San Antonio to Natchitoches, Louisiana where they arrived on July 1, 1807. Thus ended a memorable journey.

NOTE ON THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF PIKE'S PARTY.

The other eight men of the expedition, who had been left in the mountains or at the Conejos stockade were also taken to Santa Fe and later, to Chihuahua. They returned home about sixteen months later than Pike. There has been some confusion about whether they all returned or not. It was reported in an American newspaper that Meek and Miller quarreled, that Meek killed Miller with his saber, and that Meek was detained for trial by the Spanish authorities at Chihuahua. On the other hand, a document in the War Records Division of the National Archives, dated May 3, 1808 and signed by Pike, certifies that all eight of the men returned to the United States. This document is in error. Pike, in Washington at the time he signed it, must have done so on the basis of unverified reports.

The newspaper account is supported by Spanish documents which record the trial of Meek for the slaying of Miller. It was reported in the American press that Meek had killed Miller for questioning the motives of the expedition. This, if true, does not afford, in itself, proof of Pike's connection with Wilkinson and Burr. The eight men left in Mexico had access to Mexican gazettes which reported the news of the Burr affair. That one of them should speculate on the possible connection of their expedition with this affair is not at all surprising in view of the fact that many historians have engaged in ex-

actly that speculation ever since. It is surprising, however, that the man who is said to have done this was Miller. He was the most dependable man in the party. Pike had selected him for all arduous special work such as the journey to Cass Lake, the attempt to climb Pikes Peak, and the ascent to the headwaters of the Arkansas. Furthermore, Miller had volunteered to go back over the Sangre de Cristos with Meek. That such a man would have become disaffected is most out of keeping with everything else that we know about him.

In order to determine whether there exists any factual basis for the assertions in the American newspapers of the time, Professor Dane Kemp Roberts, of Colorado College, translated the Spanish document which records the testimony taken by the court of inquiry in Carrizal, and later in Chihuahua, during the trial of William Meek for the slaying of Theodore Miller on May 4, 1807. As a result of Professor Roberts' work it can now be said that there is nowhere in this lengthy document any mention of the supposed connection of Lieutenant Pike's expedition with the plans of Wilkinson and Burr. The quarrel arose between the two soldiers when both had been drinking and when Miller refused to obey the order of Sergeant Meek to retire to his quarters. There is no evidence given to support the charge made by an American newspaper that Meek had "nobly taken the life of one of the party, who attempted by an insinuation to inculpate the motives of the expedition." This charge, accepted by Professor T. P. Abernethy as valid, is thus shown to be without foundation by an examination of the evidence at Meek's trial. Pike's accusers have yet to produce any evidence of his connection with Burr.

It is clear that at least six of the men, who had been detained, did return home. There is, thus, no basis for the statement of the historian, Edward Channing, who in his book *The Jeffersonian System*, published in 1906, wrote, on page 98, that some of the men died in the mountains of frostbite and starvation. The statement made by Professor John D. Hicks, on page 268 of *The Federal Union* (2nd edition), that "One detachment of the men that Pike left behind when he entered Spanish territory was never heard from again. . . ." is also unfounded. Even less understandable than the errors that have been made concerning Pike is the fact that several standard American history textbooks fail to make any mention of his important explorations.

VI

MYSTERY OF THE MISSING PAPERS

As much interest as there is in the adventurous life of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, there is almost as much in the story of his papers. All of these, except his *Journal*, and, of course, the notes he made subsequently, were taken from him by the Spanish authorities in Santa Fe. They were classified by the Spaniards into twenty-one separate items. When Pike was returned to the United States in 1807, his papers were not restored to him but were kept in Chihuahua. During the remainder of his life Pike made strenuous efforts to regain possession of them but all his requests were unavailing.

For a hundred years nothing was heard of them. In 1906, Centennial Celebrations of Pike's expedition were held in Colorado. Inquiries were instituted by persons connected with preparing for these events, acting through Congressman Franklin E. Brooks, of Colorado, concerning the possibility of obtaining the Pike papers for display during the Centennial Celebration. These inquiries were passed on by Congressman Brooks to the Secretary of State, Elihu Root, who in turn, passed them on to the United States Embassy in Mexico City.

Mexican officials were very cooperative. But, although they made a diligent search for the Pike papers, they could not succeed in finding them. They came to the conclusion that the papers had probably been transferred to Spain. A search in the Spanish colonial archives at Seville also failed to locate them. The Centennial Celebrations had to be held without an exhibit of the long lost papers.

Secretary of State Elihu Root, in 1907, had occasion to be in Mexico City. While there he met Professor Herbert E. Bolton, of the University of California, who was working in the Mexican archives, and mentioned to him the unsuccessful efforts that had been made to find the Pike papers. Professor Bolton promised to search for them, and, in a relatively short time, he reported that he had found nineteen of the twenty-one documents. He published fourteen of the documents in the *American Historical Review* in July, 1908, together with the story of what had happened to them.

The papers had remained in Chihuahua until 1827. In that year, as a result of the suggestion of a Mexican government official, they were turned over to a boundary commission, in the hope that they might be useful in helping to determine the exact boundary between

the United States and Mexico. When the commission had finished with them, they were placed in the government archives in Mexico City but, since they were filed under the heading "International Agreements" and dated 1817-1824, they would not appear to have any connection with Pike, unless they were examined more closely. For this reason, they had been effectively lost while, at the same time, they had been effectively preserved.

Dr. Bolton did not find Items 19 and 20 of the original list to be with the others and these two items have never been located nor is it known why they were not with the other documents. Item 19 is the manuscript diary of Pike "from January 1807, to the 2nd of March of the same year, when he arrived in Santa Fe, in 75 pages." Item 20 is a letter book of Pike containing copies of his letters to General Wilkinson and to General Dearborn, the Secretary of War, "and various observations relative to the commission of the lieutenant, in 67 pages". Obviously these are among the more important documents, both in respect to subject matter and length. It is possible that they may some day be found and the long controversy regarding Pike's motives might then be set at rest. Item 21 which contained forty pages of Pike's maps has never been published in its entirety although certain of the maps were reproduced by Hart and Hulbert in *Zebulon Pike's Arkansas Journal*, published in 1932.

The State Department, having been informed by Dr. Bolton of the whereabouts of the papers, in 1910 requested the Mexican government to return them to the United States. The request was made by Henry Lane Wilson, Ambassador of the United States to Mexico and was granted by the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, the transfer does not seem to have been publicized.

In 1925, R. H. Hart, a member of the Colorado Historical Society, desired to have copies of some of the maps which had been described, but not published, by Dr. Bolton. He addressed his inquiry to the Mexican government, which again was unable to locate the papers. Hart then inquired of the United States War Department, which was also unable to locate them or to say whether the papers were in the United States or in Mexico.

In 1927, however, the cover of the papers was found in Mexico City, and in it the correspondence which showed that the transfer had been made to the United States government. Inquiry at the State Department brought the information that the papers had been turned over to the War Department. So the War Department was requested to look again for the Pike papers. After a month's search, they were found and have not been lost again. They have been of enormous use

to all students of Pike and his explorations. They are in the archives division of the Adjutant General's office.

The maps made by Pike, which were among these documents, enable us to determine with certainty that he did not climb Cheyenne Mountain for a view of Pikes Peak. They show that he mistook first the upper Arkansas and then the Rio Grande for the Red River. They prove that he was never on the western slope of the Continental Divide. They enable us to retrace with accuracy his entire exploration.

However, none of the documents found gave any evidence to support the theory that Pike was a spy for Wilkinson and Burr. It is, of course, possible that the two missing documents might contain such evidence but it seems most unlikely that this would be the case. If the two lost documents were to be discovered, we would be in a position to say that probably all is known regarding Zebulon Montgomery Pike that ever will be known. Until then, there will always be some little remaining mystery about his western exploration. This is unfortunate because it enables those who suspect Pike's motives to keep on doing so, on the ground that the missing papers might supply evidence that their suspicion is justified. In the absence of any such evidence, Pike's reputation should be entitled to the benefit of the assumption that there is not and that there never was any such evidence.

Meanwhile, it can be said that it is seldom that the story of the primary sources upon which the writing of history is based can reveal such a varied and interesting chain of circumstances as do the papers of Zebulon Montgomery Pike. The discovery of the two lost documents would make an exciting climax to that story. Some day, through such a discovery, the Pike story may be completed and the mystery of the missing papers may be closed.

VII

RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH

Zebulon Montgomery Pike spent some months, after his return from Mexico to the United States, resting from his arduous journey. He learned that he had been made a Captain while on his western exploration. He was joined at New Orleans by his wife and daughter, the only one of five children to survive infancy. In September, 1807 they went to New York by ship. Thence they went to Washington, D. C. Pike was unable to procure further advancement in rank for himself on the strength of his exploration and he was also unsuccessful in his plea that his men were entitled to double pay.

However, in May 1808, he was made Major. Later that year he was stationed at Fort McHenry, Baltimore, Maryland. During this time he prepared the journals and notes of his two expeditions for publication, which took place in 1810. The full title of his book was *An Account of Explorations to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, to the Sources of the Arkansas, Kans, La Platte, and Pierre Jaun, Rivers; performed by Order of the Government of the United States during the years 1805, 1806, and 1807. By Major Z. M. Pike. . Illustrated by maps and charts. Philadelphia: Published by C. & A. Conrad & Co. No. 30 Chestnut Street. Somervell & Conrad, Petersburgh. Bonsal, Conrad, & Co. Norfolk, and Fielding Lucas, Jr. Baltimore. John Binns, Printer. 1810.*

This was before the Lewis and Clark journals had been published and Pike became famous as a result. He deserved his fame as one of the most widely traveled men in North America and one who had prepared his own work for publication. Pike was not an accomplished scholar. His work was not well arranged. An English edition, published in London, in 1811, corrected most of his errors of spelling and grammar. His work was also translated into German, Dutch, and French. Today the original edition is quite rare and valuable. A copy was offered for sale in 1954 by a Philadelphia book dealer at \$250.00.

In 1809 Pike was given command of a battalion at New Orleans. In December, 1809 he received word of his mother's death at Lawrenceburgh, Indiana. He also received a promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel about this time. In 1810, he was stationed at Natchez and, in 1811, at Baton Rouge, where he remained until the war with England caused him to be transferred to the East.

During these years, Pike won a reputation as one of the best officers in the army. Those detachments of the regular army which served under General William Henry Harrison and which enabled him to win the battle of Tippecanoe against the Shawnee Indians in 1811 were largely trained under Pike. There is evidence, too, that he was a student of the Napoleonic campaigns, which were then being fought in Europe, and that the lessons of Napoleon's military innovations were appreciated by him. On July 6, 1812, he was made a Colonel. This was shortly after the outbreak of the War of 1812 between England and the United States.

From this time, he was busy getting his command, the 15th Regiment, a New Jersey outfit, ready for the invasion of Canada projected by General Dearborn. This invasion, by way of Lake Champlain, was abandoned before it was well begun, much to Pike's disgust. Mrs. Pike was with him, at this time, at Plattsburg, New York.

Meanwhile, a new Canadian invasion was planned from Sackett's Harbor, New York across Lake Ontario. This was to be directed against the city of York, now Toronto, Ontario. Pike was given active command of this offensive effort, with the rank of Brigadier General. He had about four thousand men at his disposal. On April 23, 1813, they sailed from Sackett's Harbor, choosing the earliest practicable time after the disappearance of ice on Lake Ontario.

On April 27, Pike stormed the city of York, personally leading and conducting the attack. It was a brilliant success. The British commander hoisted a white flag. While Pike was discussing this event with his staff on the field, an abandoned British powder magazine blew up. A rock struck Pike in the back. He died a few hours later, on ship, as he was being taken back to Sackett's Harbor, where he was buried.

His body was moved in 1819 and again in 1909 but merely to other locations in Sackett's Harbor. Recent efforts to bring his remains to a final resting place atop the great western peak, which he discovered, have been thus far unsuccessful.

Pike had won one of the successful actions fought by Americans in the War of 1812. Only Jackson's victory at New Orleans and Harrison's victory at the Thames River exceeded it in importance among the land battles. Pike's achievement came before either of these. Since both Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison achieved the presidency of the United States largely by reason of their military reputations, it is not impossible that Zebulon Montgomery Pike, had he lived, might have had a distinguished career in politics.

On the eve of the battle Pike wrote to his father, that veteran

of the Revolution, who was to survive his distinguished son by many years. He wrote, "If success attends my steps, honor and glory await my name — if defeat, still it shall be said we died like brave men; and conferred honor even in death on the American name."

These words contain the key to the character of Zebulon Montgomery Pike. He was ambitious for fame and his ambition was gratified. For honor and glory he went on his long and difficult expeditions, toiled to publish his book, risked and lost his life in battle. He was still pursuing fame when he met his death. He was not spoiled by his achievements for he always wished to achieve still more.

Though only thirty-four years of age when he died, he had been in the army nearly twenty years. Soldiering had been his whole life, and yet he had hardly any experience in actual fighting until the battle in which he commanded and died in the moment of victory. Much of his soldiering was done in routine assignments at various forts on the American frontier. This was a discouraging sort of existence, yet Pike never ceased to do the best he could, no matter how unimportant or uninteresting the task of the moment might be. His sense of duty was strong. By attention to detail he hoped to master his profession and to have the satisfaction of having done his duty.

Yet he was optimistic by nature, and inclined always to rashness. His disposition was adventurous. On his explorations, whenever he built a stockade, he reflected in his *Journal* that he could hold off a certain number of Indians, or British, or Spanish, as the case might be. Even in his desperate plight on the Conejos River, he thought he could hold off a hundred Spaniards for two days with eleven men! Then he would escape down the river at night, if he had to do so!

His loyalty was very strong. He was loyal to his parents, his brothers and sisters, his wife and child. He was loyal to his superiors in the army. Even when men like Dearborn and Wilkinson were obviously incapable in performing their work, Pike was loyal to them, because they were his superiors and because they had befriended him as a young officer. He defended both of these men, when nearly every one else attacked them. His loyalty blinded him to their faults and, to this extent, it may be said that Pike was a poor judge of men. Pike was also loyal to his country and many expressions of this feeling may be found in his letters. Because Pike was loyal to General Wilkinson and because it is known that Wilkinson was not loyal to his country, it has been assumed that Pike was also implicated in disloyal schemes against the United States. For this there is no evidence whatever and any such assumption rests on the theory of guilt by association alone, which is no ground at all, especially in view of the

fact that Pike was a young officer obeying the commands of his general.

Pike was undoubtedly a leader of men. It is true that he commanded only a small party on his explorations. Yet only once did a man complain of hardships, which were certainly bad enough to justify some grumbling. He often spared his men, when they were spent, by assuming tasks himself. He was the best marksman and the most reliable hunter of his party. Once, when he got no game, he spent the night alone, rather than return to his starving men empty handed. When at last he had an opportunity to command an army, he led the men himself. He was a hard disciplinarian, his men thought, but they knew that he never spared himself.

It must be admitted that, in some ways, Pike was poorly fitted for the explorations that he led. He was not too young, for exploration is a young man's game. But he was poorly educated, not too careful as an observer, and not very tactful as an emissary. That his expeditions were so ill equipped was the fault of General Wilkinson and the War Department rather than that of Pike. It was also Wilkinson, not Pike, who timed both expeditions so that they involved exposure to the hardships of winter weather.

Nevertheless, it is on his explorations that Pike's fame must rest. The Mississippi expedition added little to geographical knowledge, but it aided the United States in gaining territory also claimed by the British when the boundary with Canada was adjusted in 1818. His western expedition not only aided in gaining an advantageous boundary with Spain in 1819, but it also added greatly to geographical and topographical knowledge. His notes on the Spanish provinces were also extremely valuable and explain, to a considerable degree, the popularity of his book.

Whoever is the first to accomplish a thing will be remembered in history on that account. This is as it should be. Pike, on his western expedition, was the first American to traverse a vast range of territory. He was the first American to see, describe, and map the great mountain which stands like a sentinel above the high plains, and which today appropriately bears his name. Pikes Peak is a notable landmark for the traveler and Pike recognized it for that.

To those thousands of people who annually come to view America's most famous mountain and to those who live in its familiar shadow, the name of Zebulon Montgomery Pike will always have a significance which it cannot carry in any other place. Such people will have a vivid picture in their minds of the adventuresome young lieutenant and his little band of soldiers ascending an untraveled river, remarking on the strange things that met their view, and eagerly

pushing on into the unknown mountain country that lay ahead. They will feel some kinship for the early explorer, a novice in the mountains, for they will be able to compare his curiosity, his inexperience, and his appreciation of what he saw with feelings of their own.

Ten counties in as many states, eighteen cities, two bays, three rivers, and four lakes have honored Pike by adopting his name as their own. But there is, and need be, only one mountain to bear his name, and that is Pikes Peak.

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