NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Pike
National Historic Trail
Feasibility Study
Final Report

November 2022

PIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

The purpose of the Pike National Historic Trail Feasibility Study is to evaluate the significance, feasibility, suitability, and desirability[1] of designating the routes associated with the Pike Trail as a national historic trail. In Public Law 116-9, Congress asked the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate the route taken by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike during his 1806-1807 expedition into the southern portion of the Louisiana Purchase and the northern provinces of New Spain. The route begins in Fort Bellefontaine, Missouri and ends in Natchitoches, Louisiana; the section of trail which traverses Mexico is not eligible for designation as it falls outside of the United States. It spans approximately 2,700 miles, intersecting the states of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana. Preparation of the study was delegated by the Secretary of the Interior to the National Park Service (NPS) and is being completed by the NPS National Trails Office for Regions 6, 7, and 8.

Section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act specifies three eligibility criteria for national historic trail designation and ten study components. In Chapter 2, the three criteria for national historic trails have been applied to the potential designation of the Pike Trail as a national historic trail. This report presents the findings of the eligibility criteria review.

After analyzing the three eligibility criteria, the NPS has found that the proposed trail is not nationally significant, and is not feasible for designation as a national historic trail. None of these findings, however, is binding on Congress.

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service

1. "Significance" refers to the national significance of a trail when evaluated in reference to criteria defined for National Historic Landmarks and the NPS Thematic Studies. The feasibility of designating a trail is determined by an evaluation of whether or not it is physically possible to develop a trail along a route being studied, and whether the development of a trail would be financially feasible. Suitability refers to whether or not the resources under study are already adequately represented in the National Park System. Desirability refers to the desire and support of the public for trail designation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Pike National Historic Trail Feasibility Study has been completed in response to congressional direction to study the Pike Trail for possible designation as a national historic trail (NHT). The Secretary of the Interior selected the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct the study, which has been completed by a study team in the NPS National Trails Office for Regions 6, 7, and 8. The study evaluates the trail's route, historic use, national significance, costs of administration, and potential for public recreational use and historic interest to determine whether it is eligible for designation as an NHT. In addition, the study considers other alternatives for the protection of trail resources.

The purpose of a national historic trail is the identification and protection of a historic route and its historic remnants for public use and enjoyment. National historic trails are extended trails that follow as closely as possible and practicable the original routes of travel that are of national significance.

In 1806 Gen. James Wilkinson, the nation's highest-ranking military officer, sent Zebulon Montgomery Pike to the southwestern part of the Louisiana Purchase, on the poorly-defined border between Spanish and American territory. Specifically, Pike was charged with finding the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red rivers—both of which allegedly lay within the Louisiana Purchase's boundaries; Wilkinson also instructed him to meet with powerful Plains peoples like the Osage, Pawnee, and Comanche. The presence of Pike's expedition in Spanish territory did not go unnoticed and, in early 1807, Spanish forces found the ragged trespassers and brought them for questioning in Santa Fe.

During their captivity, Pike and his men received an unprecedented behind-the-scenes look at northern New Spain. Pike and his party remained in Spanish captivity - either in Santa Fe or later in Chihuahua - for almost a month before the commandant general sent them eastward across present-day Durango, Coahuila, and Texas. After stops at San Antonio and Nacogdoches, Pike reached United States soil at Natchitoches in July 1807.

This study is not a comprehensive plan. If Congress designates the Pike Trail as a national historic trail, the selected administering agency would complete a comprehensive plan and other, project-specific environmental compliance documents.

EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND FEASIBILITY

The NPS has found that the Pike Trail does not meet the NTSA-established criteria for national significance and is not feasible for designation as a national historic trail.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The Pike National Historic Trail Study has been completed in response to congressional direction expressed through Public Law 116-9 (the John D. Dingell, Jr., Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act), which became law on March 12, 2019, to study the Pike Trail for possible designation as a national historic trail (NHT). The law states:

> SEC. 2504. PIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL STUDY. Section 5(c) of the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following: "(46) PIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL.—The Pike National Historic Trail, a series of routes extending approximately 3,664 miles, which follows the route taken by Lt. Zebulon Montgomery Pike during the 1806–1807 Pike expedition that began in Fort Bellefontaine, Missouri, extended through portions of the States of Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, and ended in Natchitoches, Louisiana."

The Secretary of the Interior selected the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct the study, which has been undertaken by a study team in the NPS National Trails Intermountain Region office. Ultimately the study evaluates the trail's route, historic use, national significance, costs of administration, and potential for public recreational use and historic interest to determine whether it is eligible for designation as an NHT. As outlined in Director's Order #45, this analysis was presented to a review panel led by the Chief of the Office of Planning and Special Studies. The review panel concurred with the finding that the Pike Trail did not meet eligibility criteria and recommended that the study be closed.

NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS: BACKGROUND

Description of the National Trails System and National Historic Trails

Congress established the National Trails System in 1968 by passing the National Trails System Act (NTSA). The purpose of the National Trails System is:

> *. . .to provide for the ever increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation.*

Initially, the National Trails System consisted solely of national scenic trails and national recreation trails. National scenic trails are intended to be continuously protected corridors, 100 miles or longer, intended for outdoor recreation. These trails allow for uninterrupted travel (typically hiking and horseback riding) from end to end through scenic natural areas. Such trails are designated by Congress; examples include the Appalachian, Continental Divide, and Pacific Crest national scenic trails. National recreation trails, on the other hand, offer a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation, including motorized recreation, on trails in or near both urban and rural areas. These regional and local trails are designated by either the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior. More than 1,000 national recreation trails have been designated thus far on federal, state, local, and privately owned land throughout the country.

On November 10, 1978, Congress amended the NTSA and added national historic trails to the Act. Section 3(a)(3) of the amended act defines national historic trails as "extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historical significance." The National Trails System Act, Section 3(b), defines "extended trails" as being "trails or trail segments which total at least one hundred miles in length, except that historic trails of less than one hundred miles may be designated as extended trails."

Information about the National Trails System is available from a variety of sources, since trails are administered by agencies such as the United States Forest Service, the NPS, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). General information about the various national trails and a system-wide map are available online at:

- http://www.nps.gov/nts (NPS website on the National Trail System);
- http://pnts.org (website for the Partnership for the National Trails System);
- http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/NLCS/Trails.htm (Bureau of Land Management website on national trails); and
- http://www.americantrails.org (advocacy group for the national trails).

The NTSA provides for a federal agency to administer each national scenic trail and national historic trail in perpetuity, in cooperation with a variety of partners that includes other federal agencies, state and local agencies, American Indian tribes, local communities, and private landowners. Trail administration encompasses a variety of activities, mostly accomplished with the collaboration of partners. Trail administration does not include "management" activities, which are the purview of land managers that manage the lands upon which the trail resources occur.

Under the NTSA, trail segments that are in federal ownership (i.e., segments within lands managed by the BLM, NPS, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and others) are "federal protection components," and the protection and interpretation of those trail segments becomes subject to those agencies' ongoing planning processes. Nonfederal segments may be protected and interpreted by alternative, voluntary means such as cooperative and partnership certification agreements, easements, and actions by a range of entities, including nonprofit organizations. All trail management activity on nonfederal land is strictly voluntary. National historic trail designation does not place any federal restrictions or requirements on private landowners.

PURPOSE OF NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS

The purpose of national historic trails is defined in the NTSA as the identification and protection of the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. National historic trails are extended trails that follow as closely as possible and practicable the original routes of travel that are historically significant. The designation of such trails or routes is to be continuous, but the established or developed trails are not necessarily continuous land areas; they may include portions or sections of land areas, land and water segments, or other specific sites. Together these qualifying entities form a chain or network of areas that may be included as components of a national historic trail. NHT designation would require federal funds for the planning, development, research, and administration of the trail and related trail activities. Existing national historic trails include emigration routes, gold rush trails, routes of exploration, military routes, American Indian routes, trails established for commerce and communications, and a 1960s-era civil rights march route.

EVALUATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL DESIGNATION

The NTSA, Section 5(b), establishes three eligibility criteria—discussed in Chapter 2 – for a national historic trail study. The three criteria are:

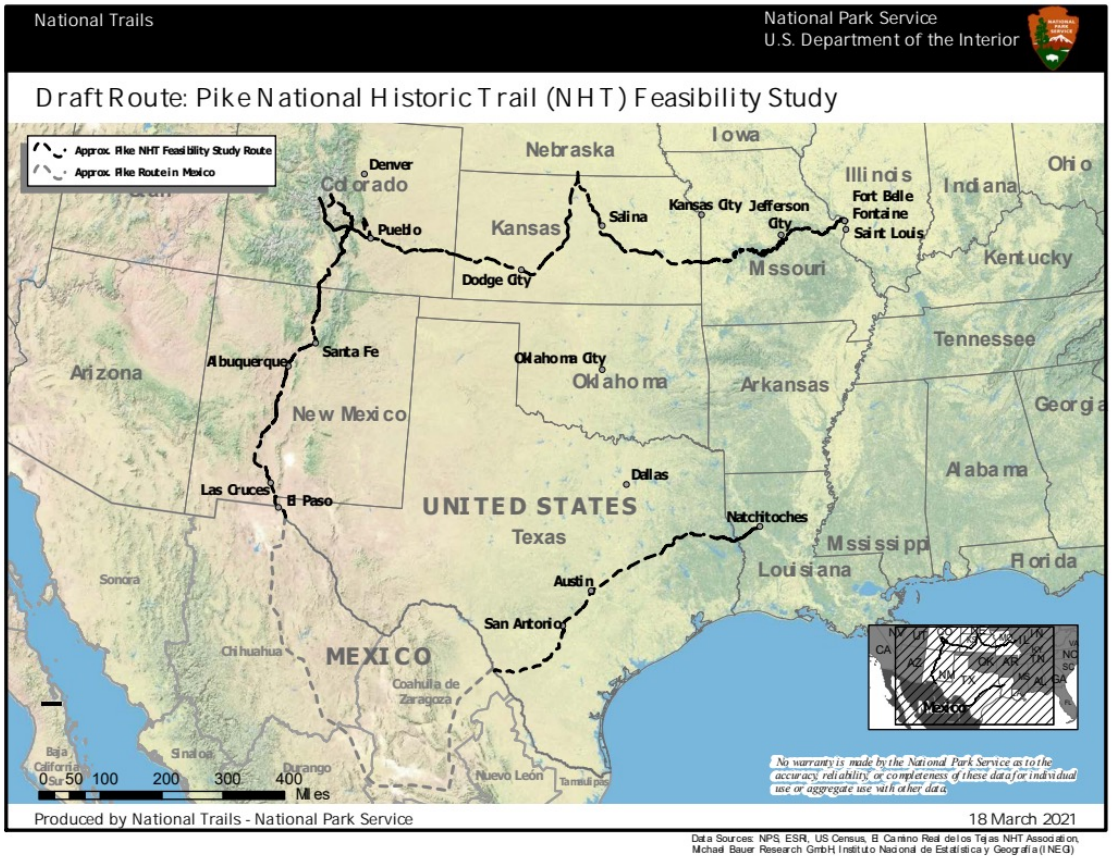
A. *It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant because of that use.*

B. *It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, and its historic use must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture.*

C. *It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historical interpretation and appreciation.*

The proposed Pike NHT represents the route taken by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike during his 1806-1807 expedition into the southern portion of the Louisiana Purchase and the northern provinces of New Spain (see map). The route begins in Fort Bellefontaine, Missouri and ends in Natchitoches, Louisiana. It spans approximately 2,700 miles, intersecting the states of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana, with an additional 1,000 miles of trail passing through three states in Mexico. The section of trail which traverses Mexico is not eligible for designation as it falls outside of the United States.

The NPS has determined that the Pike Trail does not meet the criteria for national significance, and it is not feasible as a national historic trail. It is not suitable or desirable for designation as a national historic trail. The proposed Pike NHT does not meet the national significance requirement of the NTSA. Pike's expedition did not produce clear and immediate contributions in international relations, science and technology, or the American economy; as a result, its legacy remains ambiguous to this day. While Pike's travels are a part of the historical context of established NHTs, his historic use of the route under study does not rise to the level of national significance on its own. The full evaluation of the Pike Trail to be designated as a national historic trail may be found in Chapter 2.



CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION OF NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

To qualify for designation as a national historic trail, a trail must meet all three of the criteria described in NTSA 5(b) 11A, 11B, and 11C.

CRITERION 11A

> *It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of the potential for public recreation and historical interest. A designated trail should generally follow the historic route but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing or for more pleasurable recreation.*

Evaluating significance under this criterion requires study and discussion of the historic context of the trail. The next section provides an abbreviated discussion of the proposed Pike Trail corridor.

Based on the historic context discussion (below), the study team has concluded that the events that transpired along the Pike Trail during the period of significance (1806–7) are notable enough to be evaluated under Criterion 11B to see if they rise to the level of *national* significance.

This study has also concluded that the proposed Pike NHT study route is sufficiently known to permit evaluation of the potential for public recreation and historical interest. Though certain portions—especially the Missouri-Kansas border to southern Nebraska, the circular path traced through the Rocky Mountains, and the trip eastward across Texas—remain somewhat ambiguous, the study team possesses a landscape-level knowledge of these corridors. Pike's route through Texas, for example, occurred on one of the many branches of El Camino Real de los Tejas; scarce documentary evidence, however, prohibited the study team from identifying the specific branch with any certainty. It should be noted that the route of Pike's travels through present-day Mexico is not eligible for designation.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Introduction

In 1803, the United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase from France. This vaguely defined territory roughly doubled the size of the young nation—at least, according to American interpretations of the transaction. Under President Thomas Jefferson, the United States sent multiple exploratory expeditions into what was essentially a blank spot on American maps. The most famous of these, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, explored the northern portion of the Purchase (and beyond) from 1804–1806.

Just a few months before Lewis and Clark returned, a young army lieutenant named Zebulon Montgomery Pike departed on a similar mission—this one to the southwestern part of the Louisiana Purchase, on the poorly-defined border between Spanish and American territory. Gen. James Wilkinson, the nation's highest-ranking military officer, charged Pike with finding the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red rivers—both of which allegedly lay within the Purchase's boundaries; Wilkinson also instructed him to meet with powerful Plains peoples like the Osage, Pawnee, and Comanche. Notably, Wilkinson told Pike to avoid alerting Spanish authorities to his presence—which, given the tense relations between the two countries, could easily trigger an international incident. Departing from the St. Louis area in the summer of 1806, Pike headed west across present-day Missouri and Kansas, briefly touching southern Nebraska before heading south. Continuing west along the Arkansas River, he and his compatriots lost their way and endured a miserable winter in the Rocky Mountains before building a stockade on the Conejos River in what is today south-central

Colorado. Their presence in Spanish territory did not go unnoticed and, in early 1807, Spanish forces found the ragged trespassers and brought them for questioning in Santa Fe.

During their captivity, Pike and his men received an unprecedented behind-the-scenes look at northern New Spain. The governor of New Mexico soon sent the lieutenant southward to Chihuahua, where he was interrogated by the commandant general of the Provincias Internas—the administrative unit that comprised Spain's northernmost provinces of New Mexico, Texas, and Coahuila. Pike and his party remained in Spanish captivity - either in Santa Fe or later in Chihuahua - for almost a month before the commandant general sent them eastward across present-day Durango, Coahuila, and Texas. After stops at San Antonio and Nacogdoches, Pike reached United States soil at Natchitoches in July 1807. Almost immediately he was drawn into a web of scandal resulting from the association of his commanding officer, Gen. James Wilkinson, with the treasonous schemes of disgraced former vice president Aaron Burr. Working to salvage his reputation, Pike compiled maps, journals, charts, and essays from his travels, publishing them in 1810—four years before Lewis and Clark published theirs. These represented some of the first printed English-language documents about the Louisiana Purchase available to American and European audiences.

This essay will establish the context surrounding Pike's expedition, which is essential to understanding its significance. It is important to remember that Pike's travels took place during the early years of the American republic and the last years of the Spanish colonial era in North and South America. The first part of the essay is dedicated to understanding the Spanish presence in North America and the empire's fraught relationship with the newly-independent United States. The essay then moves to the numerous exploratory expeditions conducted during Jefferson's presidency. Next, it hones in on Pike's southwestern expedition (1806–1807). The narrative follows Pike and his men through their journey while also discussing the Indigenous peoples through whose lands they passed. The essay ends with a discussion of Pike's life after the expedition before turning to Pike's legacy.

Pike's legacy remains controversial among historians, some of whom believe that he was acting on secret orders from Wilkinson—the commanding officer of the United States military who was later discovered to be a spy for the Spanish crown. On the surface, Pike's orders from Wilkinson align with the objectives of other Jeffersonian expeditions; however, some scholars posit that Wilkinson surreptitiously instructed Pike to gauge the defenses of Spanish settlements like Santa Fe—information that would become particularly valuable should Spain and the United States go to war. Another possibility exists involving Wilkinson's friend Aaron Burr, who assembled a private army with designs on either severing the trans-Appalachian West from the United States or taking control of northern New Spain. (The details remain hazy.) Whatever Burr's nefarious scheme, many believe that Wilkinson was a key participant. If true, this raises an important question: how much did Pike know of his superior's ambitions? The answer varies widely, depending on who you ask. Pike's true intentions thus remain hidden from view.

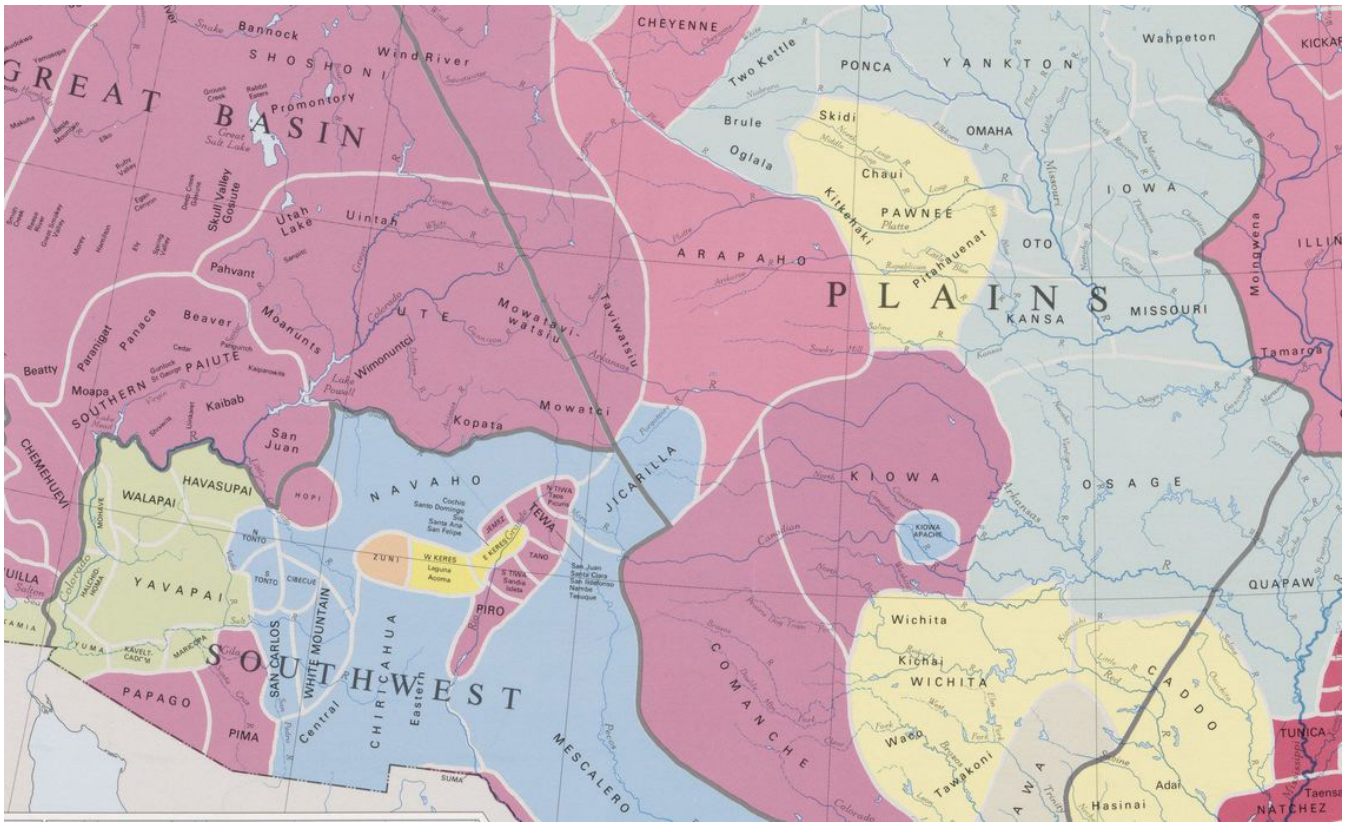


Figure 1: William Sturtevant, "National Atlas. Indian tribes, cultures, and languages: United States," US Geological Survey (1967). A general map of Indigenous languages and territories along much of Pike's route. Courtesy Library of Congress.

West, Looking East: Spanish Colonists in Indigenous Homelands

To fully understand the context of Pike's expedition, we must start much earlier. Before the advent of European colonizers, Indigenous communities fought, allied, traded, migrated, adapted, and thrived across North America. This is not prehistory; it is American history. Power relationships between European Americans and Indigenous communities were nowhere near as one-sided as many history textbooks would have us believe, especially not during Zebulon Pike's southwestern expedition. When Pike entered the Louisiana Purchase, he crossed the lands of multiple Indigenous groups that could credibly be called 'empires' (Figure 1). As we shall see, Pike's orders from James Wilkinson recognized the importance of groups like the Pawnees, Kansas, Osages, and Comanches to the expedition's success.

Figure 2: "Spanish and Portuguese Settlements in America," Cambridge Modern History Atlas (1912). This map shows the extent of New Spain at the end of the eighteenth century. Pike traversed the northern edge of this map before heading south towards Santa Fe. Notice the word 'Louisiana' stretching from northwest to southeast, indicating the sprawling territory that would switch hands from France to Spain and back before becoming part of the United States. Courtesy University of Texas Libraries.

Northern New Spain and Louisiana

To the south and southwest of these powerful Plains nations lay the northernmost reaches of New Spain, the Spanish empire's possessions in the New World north of the Isthmus of Panama (Figure 2). This included considerable territory in what is now the southern United States, spanning from Florida to California. The Spanish colonization of New Spain began in the early sixteenth century, with Hernán Cortés' seizure of Tenochtitlan (present-day central Mexico City). Aiming to bolster the empire's coffers, win souls for the Catholic church, and maneuver against geopolitical rivals like the French, Spaniards began colonizing what would become the provinces of *Nueva México* and *Tejas* in the late 1500s and 1600s, respectively. Yet by the early eighteenth century, Spanish New Mexico and Texas both functioned primarily as defensive outposts, protecting the Spanish crown's silver mines, Indigenous allies, and trade routes from European rivals—namely, France.

Seeking trade, mineral wealth, and a route to the Pacific, French traders began finding their way to New Mexico in the first half of the eighteenth century. Brothers Pierre and Paul Mallet found their way from French Louisiana to Taos in 1739, and—after a few months' captivity—Spanish forces allowed them to return home. This prompted many more Frenchmen to make the journey across the plains, and at least four French parties entered New Mexico between 1749 and 1752. Spaniards treated these parties differently, confiscated their goods and preventing many of them from returning to Louisiana (Spanish forces were particularly worried that returning traders would provide arms and ammunition to the Comanches, who consistently raided New Mexico's frontier settlements). These unwanted French incursions ceased once Spain assumed control of Louisiana in 1762.

Isolated geographically and economically, Spanish New Mexico and Texas were defined by a sense of remoteness. Both were connected to centers of Spanish authority like Chihuahua and Mexico City by *caminos reales* (literally, "royal roads") that brought settlers, priests, soldiers, Indigenous allies, enslaved peoples, and trade goods to the empire's northern frontiers; today, the road to Texas and Louisiana is known as *El Camino Real de los Tejas* ("the royal road of the Tejas") and the road to New Mexico is known as *El Camino Real de Tierra*

Adentro ("the royal road of the interior land") (Figures 3 and 4). Built upon Indigenous footpaths and trade routes, the caminos came to serve the Spanish crown's agenda. Spanish economic policies dictated that residents of New Mexico and the Texas province had to purchase officially sanctioned trade goods, which flowed northward from ports like Veracruz along various caminos reales. Yet given all the middlemen, taxes, and transportation costs involved, these goods were often exorbitantly priced by the time they reached the northern provinces. As a result, residents of both provinces often engaged in illicit trade—either with neighboring Indigenous groups or with nearby rivals (like France)—to make ends meet.

The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the important French province of Louisiana become the northeastern frontier of New Spain (Figure 2). Claimed for King Louis XIV by the ill-fated René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la La Salle, in 1682, Louisiana had proven costly to manage and difficult to govern—especially given England's seizure of Canada during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). At the war's end, France ceded Louisiana west of the Mississippi to Spain—ridding King Louis XV of a money-losing venture (and perhaps reimbursing Spain for its losses during the war). Although it became Spanish in name, the colony continued to retain a strong French influence. For European powers, it would serve primarily as a buffer zone, especially once the United States won independence from Britain. For Indigenous peoples, it continued to be home (Figure 5).

Figure 3: El Camino Real de los Tejas. Not pictured: the route's full extent southward to Mexico City. Courtesy National Park Service.

Figure 4: El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro overlaid onto modern international boundaries. Courtesy National Park Service.

Figure 5: Josef Urrutia and Nicolas La Fora, "Map of New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, 1766-1768" (1771). La Fora and Urrutia, members of the Royal Engineers, participated in an inspection of northern New Spain's presidios between 1766-1768; this map accompanied the final report in 1771. Note the names of different Indigenous groups: Na Ba Jo (Navajo), Comanche, Natages (Mescalero Apache), and more. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Spanish New Mexico

Sitting far from centers of Spanish authority like Chihuahua or Mexico City, colonists in New Mexico and Texas established relationships with neighboring Indigenous peoples—some more successful than others. Spaniards quickly tried the patience of New Mexico's Pueblo Indians, successful agriculturalists and traders that bristled at the religious zeal and violent actions of their new European acquaintances. Eventually, demands on Pueblo labor and resources, religious persecution by the Spaniards, bad weather, and raids by Navajos and Apaches brought the province to its breaking point in 1680. A carefully coordinated revolt by the Pueblos pushed Spaniards south to present-day Juárez and El Paso, where they would remain for more than a decade. After the Spanish returned to New Mexico in 1692, they dialed back their religious persecution and demands of labor. Cycles of warfare on the plains resulted in new supplies of forced Indigenous labor for Spanish colonists that had long depended on Pueblo communities and enslaved Apaches, among others, to bolster New Mexico's economy. Pueblos and Spaniards thus formed an uneasy alliance as they entered the eighteenth century, during which they would unite against the common enemies of Utes, Apaches, Navajos, and Comanches.

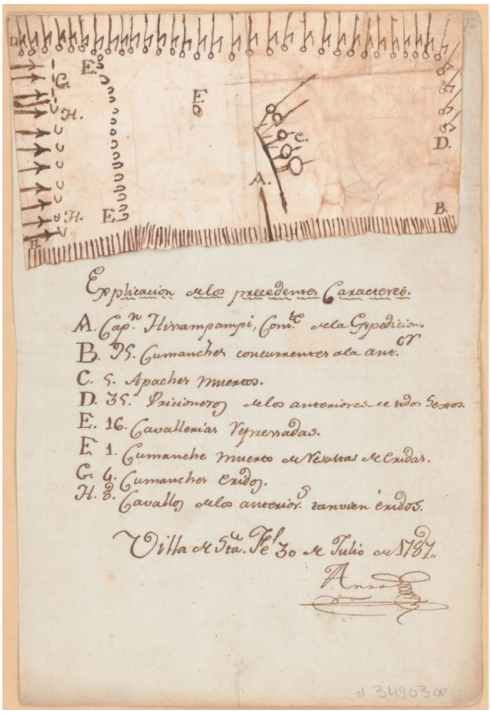


Figure 6: Juan Bautista de Anza, [Comanche pictograph map of the Battle of Sierra Blanca, 1787]. This diagram depicts a late-eighteenth century battle between Apaches and Comanches in what is now southern New Mexico. Courtesy Library of Congress.

The province ultimately survived because of diplomacy and coexistence, not military superiority. New Mexico governor Juan Bautista de Anza negotiated peace with many Indigenous neighbors in the 1780s. Spaniards, Comanches, and Navajos relentlessly pursued Gileños and related groups of Apaches (Figure 6). Tired of incessant and brutal war, these groups largely submitted to a tenuous peace agreement with Spaniards by 1790. Travel became safer, and Hispanic New Mexicans experienced economic vitality and peace. A new kind of Spanish diplomacy, coupled with an increasing desire for peaceful trade, brought relative calm to northern New Spain that would last until 1810.

Spanish Texas

In September 1685, Spanish officials learned of a plan by French explorer René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, to establish a colony near the mouth of the Mississippi. Yet due to a navigational error, he established Fort St. Louis on the Texas mainland along Garcitas Creek (near today's Matagorda Bay, between Corpus Christi and Galveston); this settlement failed after La Salle was killed by his own men. Paradoxically, La Salle effectively set in motion the Spanish colonization of Texas.

On the same 1689 expedition that eventually located La Salle's fort, general and governor of Coahuila Alonso de León encountered one of the many Indigenous groups that would play a major role in shaping Spanish Texas: the Caddos. Like the Pueblos in New Mexico, the Caddos appeared to the Spanish as more "civilized" than nomadic groups; they were skilled agriculturalists that cultivated corn, beans, squash, and watermelons, living in towns surrounded by agricultural land. Most Caddos belonged to one of three confederacies. Early accounts referred to the largest and westernmost of these (the Hasinai) as the "Kingdom of Tejas"—from a Caddo word meaning 'friends' or 'allies'; Spaniards heard the Hasinai using this term to address one another, and eventually began using it themselves.

Figure 7: Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, "Provincias internas del reyno de Nuevo España" (1846, copied from earlier map). Notice the Rio Grande (Rio del Norte) running across the upper panel, above which is present-day Texas. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Continued setbacks on the province's eastern border led to changes in Spanish Texas (Figure 7). San Antonio, located conveniently between the Rio Grande and the East Texas missions, became the provincial capital in 1773. Although San Antonio continued to thrive, raids from Apaches forced southward by Spaniards and their Indigenous allies remained a major threat. So did Comanches, who stole so many mules that the soldiers garrisoned at Béxar could not retaliate. Efforts to enlist Indigenous allies eventually bore fruit, and in 1785 a group of eastern Comanche leaders rode into San Antonio, signing a peace treaty that would last almost thirty-five years. The agreement allowed Comanches to roam freely through Texas in search of their Apache enemies.

This complex world of Indigenous diplomacy played out against a broader backdrop of major geopolitical changes. Spain entered the war for American independence as an ally of France in 1779, thus rerouting some of the crown's resources away from northern New Spain. France, of course, supported the American colonists' fight for independence from Britain; thus, the Spanish empire played a role in creating a new threat to British holdings in North America. Pike's southwestern expedition took place in this era defined by the twilight of Spanish New Mexico and Texas, the dawn of the United States, and the continued presence of powerful and politically savvy Indigenous groups.

East, Looking West: The Post-Revolutionary West

Once the American colonies emerged victorious from their war with Britain in 1783, the management of their western lands became a pressing question. Did they belong to Native Americans, individual states, or the nascent federal government? How should they be governed? And, perhaps most importantly, how could they be exploited for economic gain? To that end, extinguishing Indigenous claims immediately became a priority for the new nation's leaders. Regardless of whether they fought for or against American independence, many Indigenous groups were forced to make large land cessions.

After the end of the war with Britain, settlers from the original thirteen states poured westward into Kentucky and Tennessee. As streams of settlers flowed through routes like the Cumberland Gap (Figure 8), conflict with Indigenous peoples—especially the powerful Ohio confederacy—ensued. Yet the confederacy splintered when their British allies betrayed them at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August 1794; a few months later, British forces agreed to abandon their forts on US soil. Suddenly, the new nation's hold on its western frontier looked firmer.

Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase

Although the United States needed money badly after its war for independence, Thomas Jefferson—the nation's first secretary of state, and its third president—opposed the sale of western lands. Instead, he suggested giving them to settlers in an effort to increase settlement and thus bind the frontier to the rest of the nation. Jefferson viewed independent farmers as the backbone of the new nation; not coincidentally, he had long envisioned the Great Plains as a home for tribes that had ceded their lands east of the Mississippi to white settlers—an arrangement that would encourage Indigenous peoples to become farmers and shed their traditional ways. Ever the expansionist, Jefferson looked forward to the time when "our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people by similar laws."

Not long after taking office in 1801, Jefferson would get an opportunity to realize his dream by acquiring Louisiana—the vaguely defined territory west of the Mississippi. After ceding it to Spain in 1762, France reassumed control of the province in 1800 via a secret treaty. Yet this arrangement did not last long and, due to the ongoing revolution in Haiti, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte moved to cut his losses; thus, when Jefferson sent an emissary to France asking to purchase New Orleans, an important outlet for western America's produce, the French foreign minister asked if they would be interested in acquiring all of Louisiana instead. The Americans offered $15 million—not much more than they had been willing to pay for New Orleans—and the French minister accepted.

Figure 8: George Caleb Bingham, "Daniel Boone escorting settlers through the Cumberland Gap" (1851-52). In the late eighteenth century, settlers used the Cumberland Gap to access Cherokee and Shawnee land. Courtesy Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum/Wikimedia Commons.

Spanish leaders objected to the transaction. A senior staff member in northern New Spain talked forebodingly of a "new and independent power [that] has arisen on our continent." Residents of the United States were "active, industrious, and aggressive," and Spaniards would have to check them before they "gained the frightening advantage of more acquired territory and more [Indian] allies." Spanish leaders protested on procedural grounds, as well. According to the terms of their agreement with France in 1800, Napoleon had no right to give Louisiana to a third party. Furthermore, Spain and France had never formally decided upon the boundaries of their possessions in North America. Taking advantage of this ambiguity, Jefferson insisted that the Louisiana Purchase extended as far west as the Rockies (encompassing both the Mississippi and Missouri rivers and their respective watersheds) and the Rio Grande (including eastern New Mexico and all of Texas). Spanish officials, however, argued that the United States' claims stopped at Natchitoches, along the Red River in present-day western Louisiana; additionally, they asserted that the Louisiana Purchase did not include the upper Mississippi or Missouri watersheds. These boundaries would remain unresolved until the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819.

Jeffersonian Explorers in the West

Though Louisiana's boundaries were poorly defined, the land itself was well known by travelers from a variety of cultures. Indeed, in the years preceding Pike's expedition, many different parties made their way across the plains into Spanish New Mexico and Texas. Between 1786 and 1793, Pedro Vial—a Frenchman employed by the Spanish crown—crisscrossed Spanish Louisiana on treks

between Santa Fe and San Antonio and Santa Fe and St. Louis (the latter providing some historical precedent for the Santa Fe Trail). Yet while Vial's travels were sanctioned by Spanish authorities, the foreigners that reached Santa Fe from American Louisiana did so in violation of Spanish law. Perhaps the first to do so was Baptiste La Lande, an American of French descent who set out for New Mexico in 1804; he was likely guided by one "Josef Gervaes," a Frenchman who had led peace-seeking Pawnees to Santa Fe in 1803 and again in 1804. (Spanish forces confiscated La Lande's trade goods and prohibited him from leaving New Mexico.) James Purcell, another of the first Americans to reach New Mexico, arrived in 1805 as part of a trading expedition; he, too, was prohibited from returning home. American incursions into New Spain were not limited to Santa Fe. Philip Nolan, a Kentuckian with ties to James Wilkinson, began slipping into Texas in 1791 to trade with Comanches and other Indigenous groups. Worried that Nolan would disrupt their fragile peace with Comanches, Spanish authorities intercepted Nolan in 1801; he was struck by a musket ball and killed. Pike's expedition was therefore not the first American journey across the disputed boundaries of Louisiana and into northern New Spain but, rather, part of a long tradition.

Even before the Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson had his eye on the lands west of the Mississippi. In 1802, he tapped his private secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to lead a reconnaissance of the Missouri River watershed. Lewis selected his old army friend, William Clark, as the expedition's co-commander. Once the Louisiana Purchase occurred in 1803, Lewis and Clark's expedition was formalized and implemented. Departing St. Louis in the spring of 1804, the fifty-person expedition reached the Pacific Ocean in November of 1805. There, they established Fort Clatsop (where they spent the winter of 1805-1806) before returning in the fall of 1806. The expedition produced a massive amount of knowledge about the region beyond the Mississippi, returning with countless plant and animal specimens as well as new geographic knowledge (Figure 9); they also collected valuable information about Native American life, encountering many Indigenous groups that were already familiar with European traders and international markets. Although Lewis and Clark failed to find a commercial water route to the Pacific (and therefore Asia), their expedition showed the potential for overland travel westward—a realization that did nothing to cool the American desire for expansion.

Figure 9: " A map of Lewis and Clark's track...in 1804, 5 & 6" (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814). Pike's journals, published in 1810, beat Lewis and Clark to press by four years. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Spanish officials recognized the importance of Lewis and Clark's expedition and acted upon advice from the spy James Wilkinson (known to his Spanish handlers as "Agent 13"), who recommended that—if found by Spanish forces—Lewis and Clark either be forced to turn back or taken as prisoners. The governor of New Mexico sent at least four different parties onto the Great Plains between 1804 and 1806. While their nominal goal was to intercept Lewis and Clark, they were also charged with solidifying Spanish relationships with powerful Plains peoples like the Pawnees, Osages, Kansas, and Comanches. In the intelligence he supplied to Spanish leaders, Wilkinson emphasized the importance of "winning the affection" of Indigenous allies. His orders to Pike displayed a similar line of thinking.

Spanish forces were more successful turning back subsequent Jeffersonian expeditions. In keeping with his scientific curiosity, the president selected Scottish-born scientist William Dunbar and Philadelphia chemist George Hunter to ascend the Red River, ascertain its headwaters, and descend the Arkansas River. In order to avoid trouble with the Spaniards and the Osages, Dunbar convinced Jefferson that the expedition should instead ascend the Ouachita, a major tributary along the lower Red River. They set out in October 1804 from Natchez, but—slowed by boat troubles and injuries—they turned back in January 1805 after exploring the hot springs region of present-day Arkansas.

Their findings proved enticing enough that Congress appropriated another $5,000 (twice Lewis and Clark's allotment) for a subsequent journey up the Red River. Jefferson appointed Irishman Thomas Freeman, an astronomer and surveyor, as head of the expedition; Peter Custis, a medical student from Virginia with little field experience, joined him. After departing in May 1806, the expedition explored the Red through present-day Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, making copious notes on flora, fauna, and meteorology. They also encountered Caddos, Wichitas, Comanches, and Kiowas. Spanish forces eventually ascertained their whereabouts and sent a large force that successfully intercepted the expedition, demanding they turn back. Turning back in July, Freeman and Custis ended their voyage in September 1806.

Later that year, troops from the United States and Spain nearly came to blows in East Texas. Both sides were saved at the last second when their commanders struck a deal in October. James Wilkinson, by now the senior officer of the United States Army, offered a compromise: US troops would pull back east of Arroyo Hondo, a minor waterway in present-day western Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, and Spanish soldiers would retreat to west of the Sabine River. Wilkinson's solution led to the Neutral Ground Agreement, a stopgap solution that persisted until a more exact border could be drawn. The neutral zone between Arroyo Hondo and the Sabine became a kind of no man's land, home to outlaws of all stripes—many of whom staged unauthorized military expeditions into Spanish Texas. Pike would cross through this neutral ground at the very end of his expedition.

Zebulon Pike

Leader of the fourth and final Jeffersonian-era expedition into the Louisiana Purchase, Zebulon Montgomery Pike (Figure 10) was born on January 5, 1779, in what is now Trenton, New Jersey. Because his father—also named Zebulon Pike—had a military career, the family moved between a series of posts in western Pennsylvania before settling at Fort Washington (near present day Cincinnati) in 1790. The younger Pike would soon enlist in his father's regiment, commanded by Gen. Anthony Wayne. At age twenty, he earned promotions to second and then first lieutenant in quick succession.

Zebulon Montgomery Pike's southwestern expedition was many years in the making. His father had once served under James Wilkinson. The younger Pike eventually became Wilkinson's protégé. In the summer of 1805, while Lewis and Clark were far up the Missouri River, Wilkinson ordered Pike (then a lieutenant) to explore the upper Mississippi watershed. That winter, Pike came within a hair's breadth of the true headwaters of the Mississippi, severely testing himself and other members of his expedition in the process. He returned to St. Louis in April of 1806, but he would be home only a few weeks before receiving another assignment from Wilkinson.

Pike's Second (Southwestern) Expedition

In late spring 1806, as Lewis and Clark made their way back towards St. Louis, Wilkinson ordered Pike to explore the region drained by the Arkansas and Red rivers as part of a reconnaissance of southwestern Louisiana Territory. Spaniards controlled this vast expanse as best they could, prohibiting foreign trade and closely guarding knowledge of the region. As Freeman and Custis discovered, a cadre of armed men with scientific instruments and notebooks constituted a direct threat to Spanish sovereignty; Pike would soon learn the same lesson. Pike would initially be accompanied by twenty-two other members of his traveling party: Dr. John H. Robinson, a civilian; Baronet Vazquez, an interpreter; Lt. James B. Wilkinson, the general's son; and in addition, one sergeant, two corporals, and sixteen privates.

Figure 10: Zebulon Montgomery Pike (image first published in Benjamin F. Gue, "History of Iowa from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," 1903). Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Wilkinson gave Pike two major objectives. The first component of Pike's orders was gathering information about unfamiliar territory—a common goal of nineteenth century exploratory endeavors. Pike was to ascend the Arkansas River and descend the Red River, noting the headwaters, taking scientific measurements, and collecting specimens of flora and fauna. Because this route would take him near the Spanish settlements of New Mexico, Wilkinson warned Pike to avoid any contact with Spanish authorities. Given the tense relationship between Spain and the United States, Pike's route had obvious military significance. In a letter to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn in September 1805, the duplicitous Wilkinson explained that "Should We be involved in a War. . .and it should be judged to take possession of New Mexico," a route up the Arkansas River—which Pike would take in late 1806—would be the best course of invasion.

Pike's second objective was Indian diplomacy, a clear priority in Wilkinson's recommendations to both Spanish and American officials. Pike was to escort roughly fifty Osages (who had been ransomed by the United States from their rivals, the Potawatomis) to their home villages in western Missouri. His traveling party would also include Osage and Pawnee delegates returning from a

recent conference in Washington, D.C., where they had met with President Jefferson. Wilkinson also directed Pike to broker a treaty between the warring Kansas and Osages. Afterward, Pike was to proceed to Pawnee territory and enlist his hosts' help in bringing Comanches—a massive, powerful, and generally pro-Spanish group that dominated the southern Great Plains—to a peace conference with other Plains nations, such as the Osages.

The Osages

Pike began his journey in July 1806 at Fort Bellefontaine, near St. Louis. As mentioned earlier, areas like St. Louis and New Orleans remained mostly French in character even after Spain assumed control of Louisiana in 1762, and French families like the Chouteaus continued to dominate the regional fur trade. Founded in 1764, St. Louis was essentially "a free-trade zone" where groups like the Osage, Missouri, and Sac-Fox visited French traders. More numerous and more centralized than their neighbors, Osages (Figure 11) exerted influence over a broad geographic range, serving as intermediaries between tribes east and west of the Mississippi. Osages even stopped French traders heading westward, making them deal exclusively with their people. It is no surprise, then, that Osages eventually became—in the words of one historian—the "best-armed people in Louisiana."

Yet they were not invincible. In the 1790s, large groups of Choctaws, Cherokees, Delawares, and Shawnees dispossessed from their lands in the Southeast moved west of the Mississippi, pushing several Osage villages closer to Comanche territory. In the interest of preventing conflict in the middle of the continent, the United States offered protection to both the Great and Little Osages from surrounding tribes such as the Delawares, Kickapoos, and Potawatomis; if they would settle disputes through peaceful negotiations (over which the United States would preside), the tribes would secure protection, goods, and perpetual trade. Osages thus requested American assistance when a group of Potawatomis attacked a Little Osage hunting camp near the Missouri River in late 1805. This raid yielded the captives that Pike would eventually return to their families.

Figure 11: George Catlin, "Osage Indians" (c.1861-69). Courtesy Paul Mellon Collection/Wikimedia Commons.

After a month of traveling, mostly by boat, Pike reached the Osage villages in present-day western Missouri. Grateful for the captives' return, a Little Osage chief named Sans Oreilles delivered a speech praising the Americans:

> Osage, you now see your wives, your brothers, your daughters, your sons, redeemed from captivity. Who did this? was it the Spaniards? No. The French? No. Had either of those people been governors of the country, your relatives might have rotted in captivity, and you never would have seen them; but the Americans stretched forth their hands, and they are returned to you!!

These reverent words did not necessarily mean that the Osages considered themselves exclusive allies of the United States; after all, powerful groups like the Osages had learned to use rivalries between France, Spain, and the United States to their advantage.

As his time among the Osages came to an end, Pike's lessons on the Indigenous politics of the Great Plains continued. While his hosts welcomed federal assistance with their enemies to the east, they were less sanguine about Pike's offer to broker peace talks with the Kansas—their longstanding enemies to the west. As a result, the Osages were not as helpful as Pike had hoped. They lent the explorer only a few horses (at exorbitant prices). Pike managed to convince some Osages—four chiefs, along with some warriors and one woman—to accompany him towards the Pawnee homelands; however, the chiefs turned back in a week, disinterested in Pike's diplomatic mission. Pike also noticed that his guides took a rather indirect route towards the Republican River, probably to avoid Kansa hunting grounds. A few days before reaching the Republican River, an Osage woman told him that her husband and another man were planning to steal some of the expedition's horses; this was a humbling reminder that, despite Sans Oreilles' flattering speech, Pike possessed little clout with the Osages.

The Pawnees

In early September 1806, Pike set off across the plains of what would become Kansas to meet the Pawnees—residents of what is now Nebraska and northern Kansas. Pawnees were skilled agriculturalists but relatively late to acquire horses and European trade goods, thus leaving them at a competitive disadvantage. Plains Apaches, who were already flush with guns and horses, began taking enslaved Pawnees to New Mexican markets in the seventeenth century. Eventually, Pawnees acquired firearms and horses, the latter of which totally reoriented the society's relationship to the plains. Initially maintaining small herds and using horses only for hauling, Pawnees quickly became known for their horsemanship.

Like many other Indigenous groups, the Pawnees learned to play different European empires against one another. The Pawnees acquired French guns in the early eighteenth century, using them against Apaches on the western plains. These same Apaches traded with Spaniards in New Mexico, alarming them with stories of French influence among the Pawnees. In 1720 the governor of New Mexico sent military officer Pedro de Villasur north with more than one hundred Spanish and Pueblo soldiers, led by an enslaved Pawnee man named Francois Sistaca; ambushed by Pawnees and Otoes near the Platte, Spanish forces suffered heavy casualties. Despite lasting memories of the Villasur debacle, by the 1790s Spaniards regularly gave Pawnees gifts to facilitate trade (a major departure from the crown's previous approach to Indigenous diplomacy).

Figure 12: Charles Bird King, "Sharitarish (Wicked Chief), Pawnee" (c. 1822). Courtesy White House Collection/Wikimedia Commons.

In late September 1806, Pike reached a Pawnee village along the Republican River in present-day southern Nebraska. It was occupied by the Kitkehahkis, a band of Pawnees led by Sharitarish (Figure 12). Pike learned that a rather impressive force of Spanish troops led by Lt. Facundo Melgares had recently departed the Pawnee village. Although sent primarily to make a broad reconnaissance of the plains and to locate either the Lewis and Clark or Freeman and Custis expeditions, Melgares and his men also distributed gifts and medals to the Pawnees.

Spurred by the presence of other competing empires, Pike boldly demanded that the Kitkehahkis take down a Spanish flag brought by Melgares's party. He insisted they raise an American flag, arguing that "it was impossible for the nation to have two fathers; that they must either be the children of the Spaniards or acknowledge their American father." Despite the rather sorry appearance of his band compared to the hundreds of recently departed Spanish soldiers, the Pawnees complied. Yet as with the Osages, one ceremonial gesture did not necessarily indicate a lifelong allegiance to "their American father." Sharitarish later tried to persuade Pike to turn back, but eventually the chief let the American and his men proceed on their journey. The chief refused, however, to help Pike meet with the Comanches—with whom the Pawnees were at war.

Into the Mountains

After addressing his diplomatic assignments, Pike transitioned into the more exploratory parts of his mission. On October 7, Pike and his party left the Pawnee village heading south by southwest. Following the trail of Melgares' men, they arrived at the Great Bend of the Arkansas River in present-day central Kansas on October 18. Here, the party fulfilled another of its goals by sending Lt. James Wilkinson (the general's son), five soldiers, and the remaining Osages downstream in canoes on October 29. Pike and his men continued up the Arkansas, noting a variety of animals: prairie dogs, deer, elk, wild horses, and massive amounts of bison. Undeterred by Sharitarish's refusal to help locate any Comanches, Pike remained watchful for signs of "the savages"; on November 11, he

noted that they were about to enter "the Tetau [Comanche] country." Pike and his men were not alone in their difficulty locating Comanches. On November 22, the party encountered some Pawnees returning from an unsuccessful attempt to find their Comanche enemies. The Pawnees took Pike's tobacco and proceeded to demand other goods, like ammunition, corn, and blankets. When Pike refused, the Pawnees began stealing supplies. Pike threatened to shoot the next person that touched their equipment, and the Pawnees rode off. The party tabulated its losses and continued.

The next day, the expedition halted and began construction of a shelter near present-day Pueblo, Colorado. Pike and some of his men, inspired by views of the "Mexican Mountains" (the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains), took a lengthy detour and attempted to climb a prominent peak that had been visible for the past week. Called Ta-Wa-Ah-Gath (Sun Mountain) by the Southern Utes and El Capitán by Spaniards, this monolith would eventually become known as Pike's Peak—despite the fact that November snows thwarted the attempted ascent of the explorer and his inadequately dressed climbing party. The party continued up the Arkansas, turning north at present-day Cañon City, Colorado, toward South Park. This was a fateful decision that would lead to a miserable winter. On December 13, some sixty-five miles southwest of present-day Denver, Pike reached the headwaters of what he correctly identified as the South Platte. The staggering magnitude and convoluted geography of the Rockies quickly led to Pike's realization that he was lost. The expedition soon crossed a mountain pass, and Pike then found a river he believed to be his other objective: the Red River. The men spent a dismal Christmas in the wilderness, with many suffering from frostbite. Pike soon discovered that he was actually on the upper Arkansas, and that he and his men had traveled in a circle. He would not fulfill his orders to find the headwaters of the Red River.

Figure 13: "Views at Great Sand Dunes National Monument and Preserve, Colorado." Looking across Great Sand Dunes National Park (at the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley) with the Sangre de Cristos in the background. Courtesy NPGallery.

In early January, Pike and his men headed south, leaving some expedition members behind to care for the expedition's horses. Carrying seventy-pound packs, the expedition set off across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains (Figure 13). Nine of fourteen men suffered frostbite, and Pike left three in a temporary camp with promises that they would not be forgotten. After descending into the San Luis Valley, they reached the Conejos River (a tributary of the Rio Grande) in present-day south-central Colorado, where they built a stockade near what they believed to be the Red River. Eventually, Pike allowed one of the expedition members—Dr. John Robinson, a civilian added to the rolls at Wilkinson's request—to set out for Santa Fe. Upon his arrival, Robinson alerted Spanish officials to Pike's party, and soldiers arrived and arrested Pike and his men on February 16, 1807. They were escorted to Santa Fe on the 28th, where Pike's papers and notes were confiscated. A Spanish lieutenant remained at the stockade to wait for the expedition members that had been left behind, eight of them in total. Given the party's desperate state, historian Jared Orsi calls this encounter "as much a rescue as an arrest."

Pike in Captivity

Since 1610, Santa Fe had served as the capital of the province of the New Mexico. Like St. Louis, it was an important link in a global trade network connecting Spanish, French, and British empires—as well as Plains Indians like the Comanches. Rooted in the uneasy and often violent relationship between Pueblos and Spaniards, the province eventually developed a diverse population of several thousand that included Mexicans, Apaches, Navajos, Utes, and Comanches. El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro provided New Mexicans with the material goods necessary to scrape by but not enough to thrive or profit; therefore, the province's multicultural citizens usually met their needs in other ways. Annual trade fairs in Taos attracted Indigenous, European, and New Mexican traders eager to swap horses, hides, furs, cloth, crops, weapons, and even enslaved peoples or captives. Despite Spanish laws prohibiting trade outside the empire, these fairs became essential to the province; New Mexico's governor even sent messengers (and gifts) to important Comanche leaders that attended these fairs—part of a peacekeeping strategy that had buoyed the colony since the 1780s.

The Comanches

Pike never fulfilled Wilkinson's orders to meet with Comanches, the tribe that—despite their relatively recent arrival in the Southwest—held sway over much of northern New Spain (Figure 14). Popular depictions of Comanches, such as John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), usually portray them as a hyper-violent group bent on terrorizing white settlers. Yet for the Comanches, violence was anything but random and cruel; it was part of a larger economic strategy of resource extraction and mobilization. Like the Osages, Comanches became expert middlemen during the eighteenth century, leveraging their huge stores of buffalo hides and Spanish horses—sometimes obtained legally, sometimes not—to their advantage. The Comanches ruled the southern plains by functioning as the hub of a massive system connecting multiple nodes of Spanish power and other Indigenous groups across many different ecosystems. Rather than destroy Spanish settlements in New Mexico and Texas, Comanches essentially harvested them like crops. Thus, through both trading and raiding, the Comanches gained consistent access to Spanish resources.

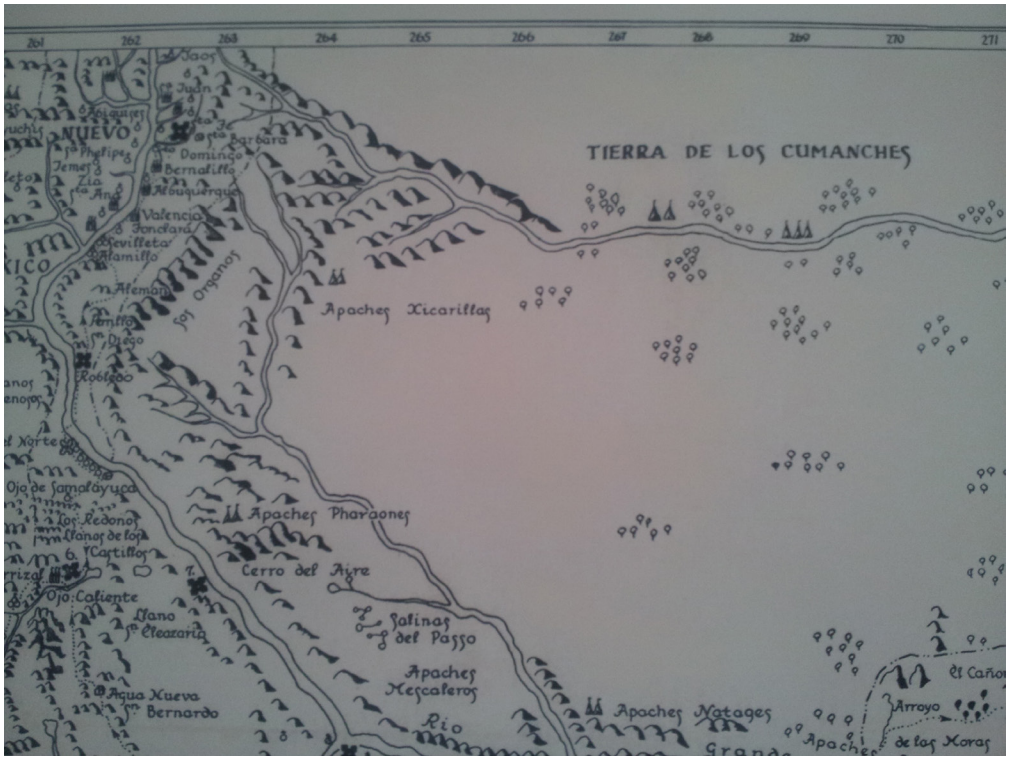


Figure 14: A close-up of Josef Urrutia and Nicolas La Fora's 1771 map of northern New Spain), focusing on what is today northeastern New Mexico. Notice how the area is labeled "Tierra de los Cumanches" (Land of the Comanches)—a nod to their control over large swaths of the southern plains. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

After enduring a barrage of violent raids in the 1770s, New Mexico governor Juan Bautista de Anza met (and embraced) western Comanche leader Ecueracapa in front of the governor's palace in Santa Fe in late February 1786; the ensuing agreement, and a similar one made in San Antonio in 1785, would cement a lasting peace between the two sides. Yet the Comanches were a large and diffuse group with an appetite for new sources of goods, and soon eastern Comanches began trading with Americans filtering from Spanish Louisiana onto the southern plains in the late 1790s. To the east, powerful Americans took notice of this effect, and began to entertain the idea of prying the Comanches away from the Spaniards. In 1805, none other than James Wilkinson posited that a treaty with the Comanches would strengthen the United States' claims to the Southwest. Pike's orders to meet with the Comanches—who Wilkinson deemed "the uncontrouled [sic] Masters of that Country"—make all the more sense in this regard.

The Pueblos

While the Comanches were relative newcomers to New Mexico, the Pueblos—a group with deep roots in the area—had long been responsible for the irrigated landscapes that Pike witnessed along the Rio Grande. Sometime during the thirteenth century, Ancestral Puebloan peoples moved away from the great houses of the Four Corners area and migrated east towards the Rio Grande, where they established many smaller agricultural "city states." Although largely concentrated along the northern part of the river and its tributaries, tens of thousands of Pueblos lived all across New Mexico, from Zuni Pueblo east to Pecos Pueblo and from Taos south to Socorro. These separate groups were linguistically diverse, but they shared some common characteristics—most notably, individual pueblos consisting of mostly multistory buildings subdivided into many different rooms, somewhat akin to modern-day apartment complexes (Figure 15).

As New Mexico grew in the seventeenth century, Spaniards remained concentrated along the Rio Grande from south of Albuquerque all the way north to Taos (notwithstanding a settlement farther south at El Paso del Norte). While proximity to water was obviously important, this pattern of settlement also secured another precious resource: Indigenous labor. Even missionaries, ostensibly focused on converting Puebloan peoples to Catholicism, utilized their labor. But spiritual repression, mixed with disease, violence, poor harvests, population pressure, Navajo and Apache raids, and persistent demands for Pueblo labor, led to the Pueblo Revolt in 1680—an uprising coordinated amongst many pueblos that successfully expelled Spaniards from New Mexico until the *reconquista* (reconquest) of 1692. After that, Spaniards realized that—in the words of one historian—"there were limits to the exploitation the Pueblo Indians would tolerate." Life remained difficult on the northern frontier of New Spain, and Pueblos and Spaniards often came together to defend New Mexico from Navajo, Ute, Comanche, and Apache raiding that plagued the province until the late eighteenth century.

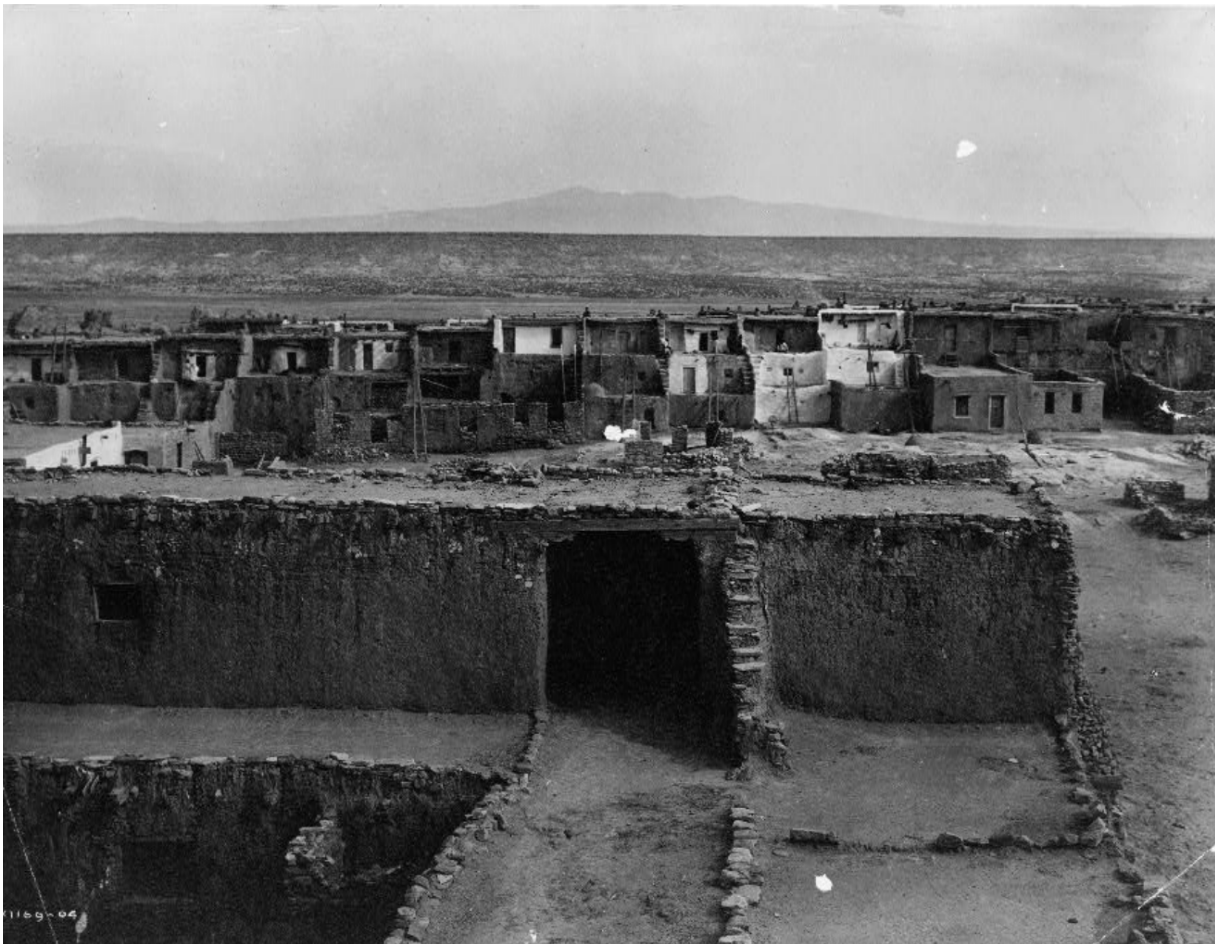


Figure 15: Edward S. Curtis, [Acoma from the church top] (c.1905). Courtesy Library of Congress.

Pike's Audience with the Governor

Traveling south along the Rio Grande through the juniper-studded high plains of northern New Mexico (Figure 16), Pike and his escorts passed through the pueblos of Ohkay Owingeh, Pojoaque, and Tesuque—which, he noted, "consisted principally of civilized Indians, as indeed [do] all the villages of New Mexico, the whites not forming the one twentieth part of the inhabitants." When Pike arrived in Santa Fe on March 3, he found Governor Joaquin del Real Alencaster already quite suspicious of his party. This was due in large part to the governor's audience with Dr. John Robinson, who had supposedly left the stockade about month earlier due to "pecuniary demands" but may have been performing a reconnaissance of Santa Fe and its surroundings. Robinson told Real Alencaster that he was a Frenchman from St. Louis seeking to collect a debt from some traders in New Mexico, and that—after separating from his party in the Rockies—he had been guided to Santa Fe by some Utes. Real Alencaster, seeing through Robinson's guise, guessed (correctly) that Robinson was an American and, therefore, a suspicious character. He subsequently attached Robinson to a military escort headed south to Chihuahua and sent a party to locate Robinson's companions.

The most famous excerpt from Pike's first meeting with Real Alencaster reflects the contested nature of the United States' southwestern boundary. Asked by the governor if he came to "reconnoitre our country," Pike responded that "I marched to reconnoitre our own." At a subsequent meeting, the governor inspected Pike's papers. Real Alencaster knew that he could not simply detain an American army officer indefinitely—at least, not without causing an international stir; he also knew that he could not simply free Pike and his men. The governor thus ordered Pike and his men to march to Chihuahua for an audience with Nemesio Salcedo, the commandant general of the Provincias Internas. Pike's papers were returned to his trunk, which would be watched by his escort.

Pike thus entered into a comfortable sort of captivity in New Spain, during which he was treated more like a visiting diplomat than a spy or trespasser. Before leaving Santa Fe, he dined with the governor. Over wine and food, Real Alencaster became chatty and revealed some sensitive information about a feud between senior Spanish bureaucrats concerning the Dunbar and Hunter expedition. Pike continued to hold interesting conversations like this with almost every Spaniard he encountered, even ones that were nominally his captors. As Pike's southbound travels progressed, many other residents of northern New Spain were eager to hear about Pike and his travels and his country in general. Pike was only too happy to ask them about their lives, as well. These conversations no doubt informed the journals Pike would publish in 1810—especially the appendices, which contained essays on New Spain. Pike later told Secretary of War Henry Dearborn that, although he was not allowed to use a pen, he carried a small pencil with him; whenever he got a chance, he jotted quick observations and journal entries on scraps of paper. Whatever his men could not hide in their gun barrels, they kept on their persons.

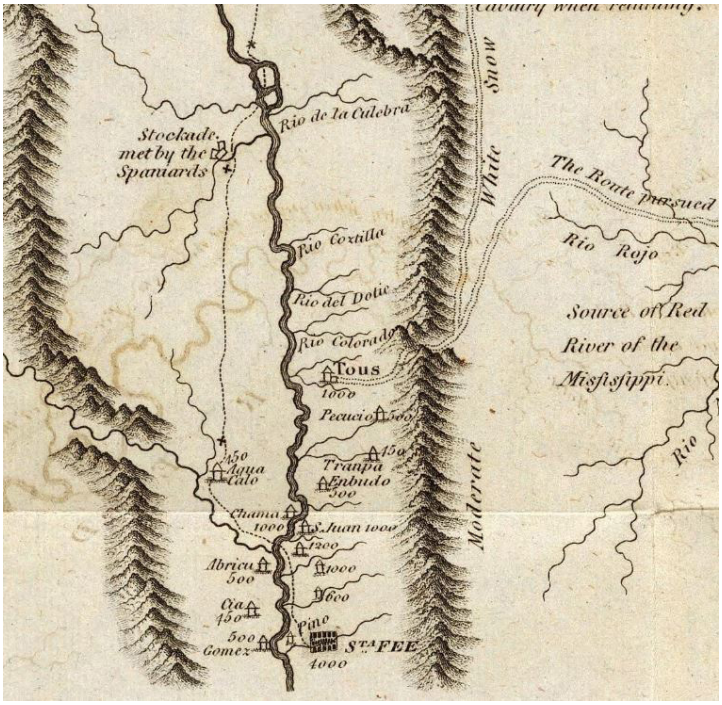


Figure 16: Zebulon Pike, "Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana" (Philadelphia: C. &. A. Conrad, 1810). This map displays Pike's route from the stockade into Santa Fe, taken from the maps published in 1810 as part of his journals. Courtesy David Rumsey Map Collection.

South Along El Camino Real

A few days later, south of Albuquerque, Pike and his traveling party of six privates were joined by Robinson, whose escort to Chihuahua had stopped as soon as Pike had arrived in Santa Fe. The party was also joined by Lt. Facundo Melgares, whose expedition Pike had been trailing on the plains. Pike instantly got along with Melgares, and his captivity—already lax—became even more so. Melgares restored Pike's trunk to him and also removed Robinson's guard; the lieutenant even hosted a fandango for them. The party continued south along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro and on March 12, near present-day Socorro, they passed trading caravans—one of which contained an estimated fifteen thousand sheep "for other provinces from which they bring back merchandize." Here, Pike witnessed New Mexico's glut of sheep and its lack of other trade goods ("merchandize"), two important components of the provincial economy that would eventually spur trade along the Santa Fe Trail about fifteen years later. Pike noticed something else important: trading caravans generally left New Mexico only in fall and early winter, and "during the other parts of the year no citizen travels the road." Many hundreds of miles separated New Mexico from Chihuahua and Mexico City, making it hard to keep the province supplied. Trade with Indigenous peoples helped, but it too depended on inconsistent supplies of trade goods sent along the camino real. The considerable physical and cultural separation between New Mexico and colonial authorities farther south was just one of many interesting dynamics that Pike would commit to his journal (which, unlike many of his papers, Pike managed to retain throughout his travels).

Chihuahua

Leaving El Paso on March 23, Pike arrived at the presidio of Carrizal on March 27. It was here that he "saw the Gazettes of Mexico, which gave rumors to colonel Burr's conspiracies, the movements of our troops, &c. &c." If we take Pike

at his word, this was his first hint of the scandal that would engulf him upon his return to US soil. Next, Pike and his escorts headed to Chihuahua, the capital of Nueva Vizcaya, arriving on April 2, 1807. Although Chihuahua was no longer important as a mining center, it also served as the military epicenter of the northern frontier and the seat of the Provincias Internas—the large and relatively new administrative unit encompassing northern New Spain.

Here, Pike met with Nemesio Salcedo, the commandant general of the Provincias Internas, who—based on intelligence from James Wilkinson—had halted Freeman and Custis's expedition up the Red River in July 1806. Salcedo combed through Pike's papers, confiscating those he deemed (in Pike's words) "relevant to the expedition." Initially Pike believed that his principal crime was merely trespassing on the wrong side of the Rio Grande; however, to Salcedo, other parts of Pike's orders—river exploration, data collection, Indigenous diplomacy—proved much more alarming. Pike stayed three and a half weeks in Chihuahua, seemingly with his future in doubt. (In later letters to Wilkinson, however, Salcedo indicated that he had always planned to free Pike but keep his papers.) As he had elsewhere, the explorer talked politics, religion, and philosophy with important locals—earning the ire of Salcedo.

The rest of Pike's men soon emerged from the Rockies, and—based on some of the details they revealed—Salcedo became convinced that Pike was the forerunner of a US invasion of New Spain. Even though the rescued men had not yet caught up, Salcedo summarily ordered Pike and his party to prepare for departure; they were to return home, taking Robinson with them. Melgares escorted the Americans out of Chihuahua on April 28, heading roughly southeast. On May 6, somewhere beyond Goajoquilla (now Jiménez), Melgares relinquished his role as the party's escort. Sometime before their parting, Pike and his friend Melgares had exchanged gifts, with Pike bestowing a shotgun upon his new friend. On May 14, shortly after passing the Rio Nazas, Pike came upon a party including "two Appaches in irons"—casualties of Spain's ongoing war against Apaches who faced the prospect of "transportation beyond the sea, never more to see their friends and relations." Pike felt sympathy for them, "knowing as I did the intention of the Spaniards towards those people."

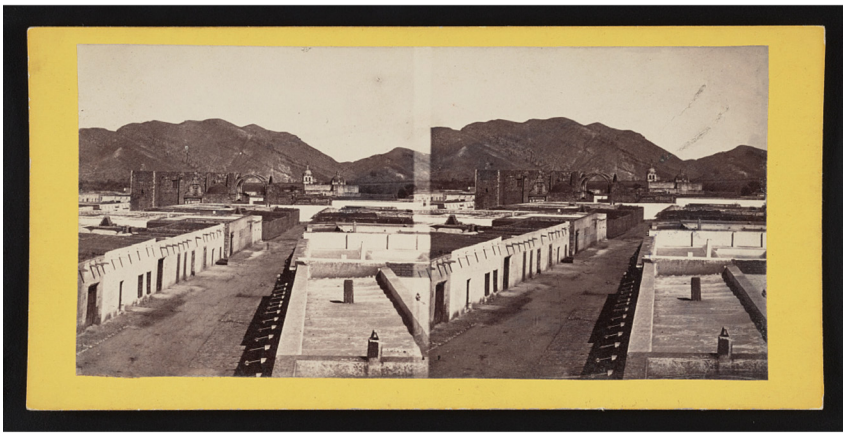


Figure 17: [Street view northeast from the plaza, Chihuahua, Mexico] (c. 1860-1930). Courtesy Library of Congress.

The Apaches

Pike's sympathy was likely informed by his conversations with Melgares, many of which touched upon engagements with the Apaches. Apaches had been present in New Mexico since the earliest days of colonization—hunting, gathering, trading, and practicing seasonal agriculture across mountains, river valleys, and plains. By the 1640s, once it became obvious that New Mexico would not yield fantastic harvests of gold and silver, Spaniards began to seek another form of riches: enslaved Apache labor. Apaches toiled throughout the Spanish empire, in New Spain's silver mines, plantations in the Yucatán, tobacco farms in Cuba, and households in New Mexico (Figure 18). Apaches soon began targeting towns along the Rio Grande, and hostilities intensified as Apaches began offering refuge to Pueblo Indians fleeing Spanish rule. Given the religious nature of the Spanish colonization project, raids to punish unbelievers were common throughout the 1600s. Their real purpose, however, was much simpler: enslaving their Indigenous enemies.

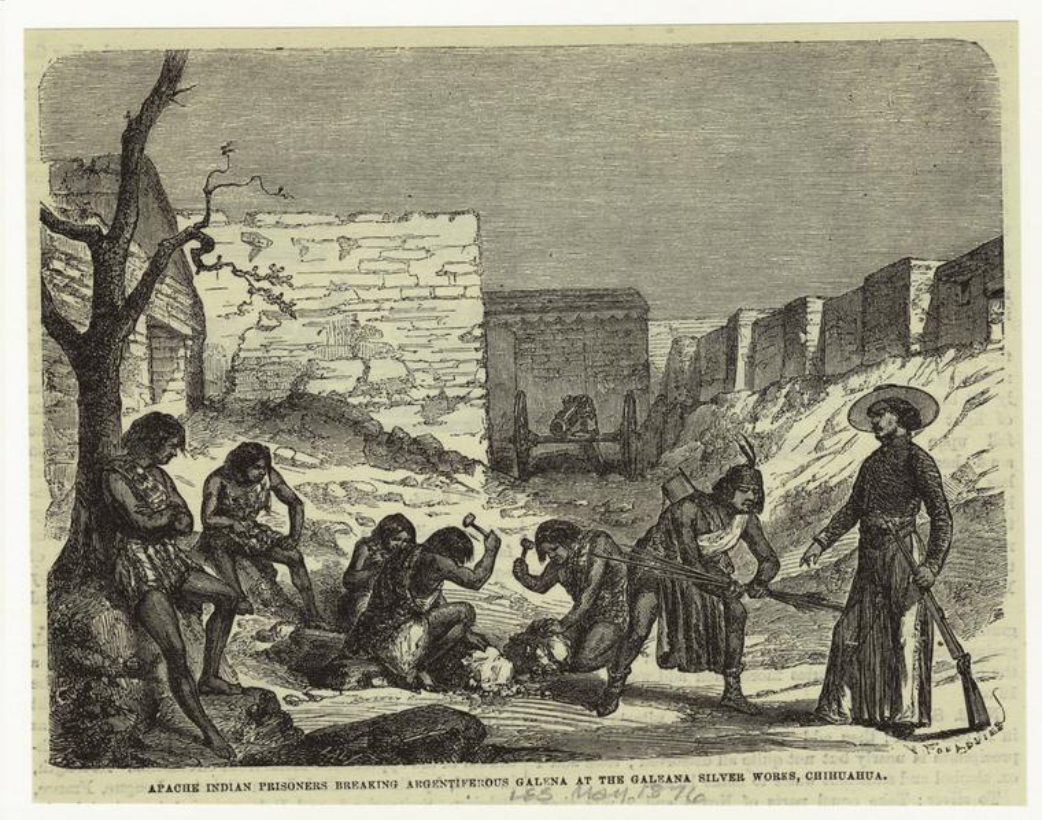


Figure 18: Jean Antoine Valentin, "Apache Indian prisoners breaking argentiferous galena and the Galeana Silver Works, Chihuahua" (1876; published in Leslie's Monthly Magazine between 1904–1905). Courtesy Wallach Division Picture Collection/New York Public Library.

Abandoning horticulture due to repeated Comanche raids, Apaches remade themselves as horse raiders. Prevented from visiting Pueblo trade fairs by Comanches, they pushed southward into Sonora, Nueva Viscaya, and Coahuila; in fact, by the 1730s, Apache raids had closed many mines in Sonora. Unable to exploit Pueblo Indians as they had before, Spaniards turned to Apache captives for forced labor. New Spanish offensives in the 1770s failed to curtail Apache raiding, and by the end of the eighteenth century subduing the Apache threat remained a priority across northern New Spain. By the time of Pike's visit, Apaches would have been prevalent—but not as far south as they had once been. In his words, they were "reduced to seven hundred men, but still continue to keep the frontier of four provinces in alarm and give employ to two or three thousand dragoons."

Along El Camino Real de los Tejas to Natchitoches

The party reached the Presidio Rio Grande on June 1, placing them just west of the present US-Mexico border in Guerrero, Coahuila. The following day, Pike noticed that someone had stolen his compass; he and his traveling companions crossed the Rio Grande that evening. Data about his exact location is scarce for the next four days. On June 6, Pike mentioned the appearance of "wood land, which was the first we had been in from the time we left the Osage nation." The next day the party reached San Antonio, the capital of Spanish Texas.

Although Texas' mission and presidio system dwindled in the late 1700s, San Antonio remained an important bastion of both religious and military authority. As long as there was a military presence in Texas, there would be soldiers stationed at Presidio San Antonio de Béxar; these soldiers, in turn, created enough of a market to sustain the area's ranchers and farmers. The five San Antonio missions were the most successful in Texas, with thriving farming operations irrigated by the San Antonio River. The number of converts, however, remained small; the missions attracted mostly Coahuiltecan-speaking groups from the lower Rio Grande seeking food and protection from Apaches (who occasionally sought refuge at Spanish missions, as well). At the time of Pike's visit, San Antonio held roughly two thousand souls—mostly laborers that identified as mixed race or Indian. During his time in San Antonio, Pike enjoyed some of the same privileges he did in Santa Fe and especially in Chihuahua: dining at the governor's house, attending dances, and conversations with local intellectuals—who, as Pike notes, "exhibited an astonishing knowledge of the political character of our executive, and the local interest of the different parts of the union."

Pike's party left San Antonio on June 13, after which he encountered "prairie like Indiana territory." Pike's party reached the Trinity River (near present-day Crockett, Texas) roughly a week later, on June 21. They soon crossed the Angelina River, just west of Nacogdoches—the settlement established in 1779 by the colonists that had been recalled from Los Adaes and forced to settle at San Antonio in 1773. Here he stopped at the *rancho* of William Barr and Samuel Davenport, founders of a Nacogdoches-based trading firm that dominated the neutral ground between the Sabine River and Arroyo Hondo. Despite their American origins, both were Spanish citizens with a license to engage in trade; in order to create pro-Spanish sentiment, they catered to the Indigenous peoples of the area. Pike met them during their most profitable decade, in which they supplied Spanish soldiers garrisoned at Nacogdoches as insurance against a possible American invasion. Pike described the territory near the ranch as "well watered but sandy; hilly soil-pine, scrub oak, &c."

Pike crossed the Sabine River on June 29, 1807, noting "the cantonment of the Spanish troops, when commanded by Colonel Herrara, on the late affair between the two governments"—a reference to the tensions of fall 1806 that almost escalated into war. Because the Sabine represented the western boundary of the neutral ground between Spain and the United States, Pike also noticed "10 or 15 Americans hovering near the line, in order to embrace an opportunity of carrying on some illicet [sic] commerce with the Spaniards, who on their side were equally eager." Clearly, the edges of the Spanish empire were still vulnerable to contraband trade. Perhaps sentimental at the end of his journey, Pike reflected on his amicable feelings towards his captors—especially Lt. Melgares. "And here I think proper to bear testimony to the politeness, civility and attention of all the officers, who at different periods and in different provinces commanded my escort," he wrote, also acknowledging "the obliging, mild dispositions evinced in all instances." On July 1, Pike passed Los Adaes, the former capital of Spanish Texas, before entering American soil at Natchitoches late that afternoon. The ever-patriotic Pike waxed poetic about his return: "Language cannot express the gaiety of my heart when I once more beheld the standard of my country waved aloft!"

The Expedition's Aftermath

Yet Pike did not receive a hero's welcome in the United States. He had failed to fulfill some of his obligations, like meeting with Comanches and finding the headwaters of the Red River; however, his lukewarm welcome largely stemmed from controversy regarding his mentor and superior. Commenting on Pike's return, newspaper editors dubbed him "the beast of Santa Fé" and "a parasite of Wilkinson." Suspicion about Wilkinson's relationship with Aaron Burr cast a long shadow over anything the general touched, Pike's expedition included. Only a week before Pike's return to the United States, a grand jury indicted Burr. His trial began August 3, and—despite testimony to the contrary—he was found innocent of both treason and the lesser charge of filibustering. Pike's name came up many times in the proceedings, but it was Wilkinson's reputation that suffered the greater blow. Pike repeatedly maintained the general's innocence, and Wilkinson was acquitted by a court martial in 1811.

Desperate to revive his reputation, Pike attempted to curry favor with Thomas Jefferson, who in 1807 was halfway through his second term as president. He brought back a pair of grizzly cubs for the Virginian, who was famously fond of natural wonders. In February 1808, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn wrote Pike to say that—although Jefferson had not officially ordered either of his expeditions— he not only approved of them but held them in high regard. Pike's supporters in Congress drafted a bill to award him and his men with land and double pay, yet Congress never voted on it. Being that 1808 was an election year, perhaps anything even remotely connected to Aaron Burr's name was too politically risky.

The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike (1810)

In an effort to reclaim his good name (and maybe make some extra money), Pike began writing accounts of his journey up the Mississippi River and his southwestern expedition shortly after his return to American soil in 1807. The southwestern account proved the more difficult to write, owing to the papers confiscated by Nemesio Salcedo. Most glaringly, Pike had to reconstruct his journey without his field notebook, which Pike scholar Donald Jackson dubs "by far the most instructive and valuable" of the confiscated material. Fortunately, Pike retained possession of "the whole of [his] Journals; courses; and distances; and many other Geographical; Historical; and Philosophical notes."

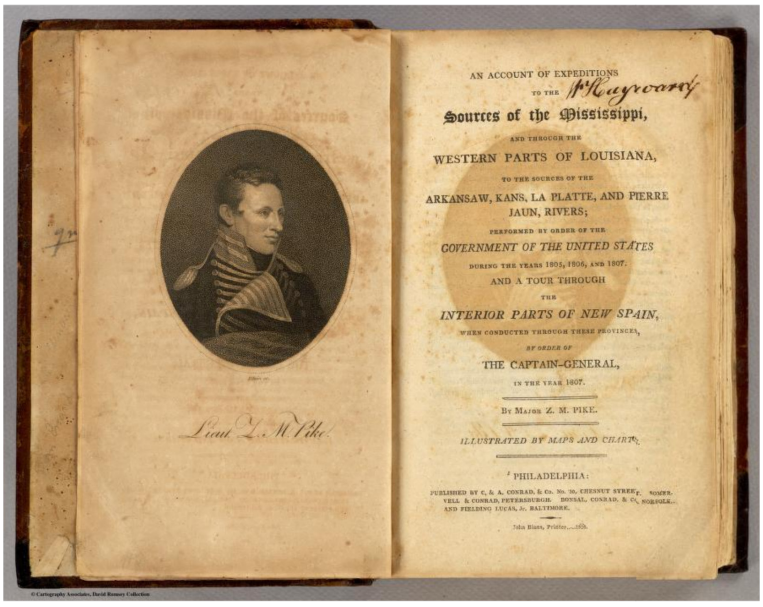


Figure 19: The frontispiece of Pike's journals, published in 1810 (see Figure 6 for publication details). Courtesy David Rumsey Map Collection.

He worked quickly to organize his material, producing a draft report for Dearborn by late January 1808. Later that year he employed a draftsman to produce the volume's maps; he also busied himself writing essays that would appear as appendices to the journals (informed by the aforementioned "Geographical; Historical; and Philosophical notes" he smuggled out of New Spain). They would appear together in 1810 as *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike* (Figure 19), which—owing to its popularity—was translated for European audiences into French, German, and Dutch. A London publisher would produce a second English language version in 1811.

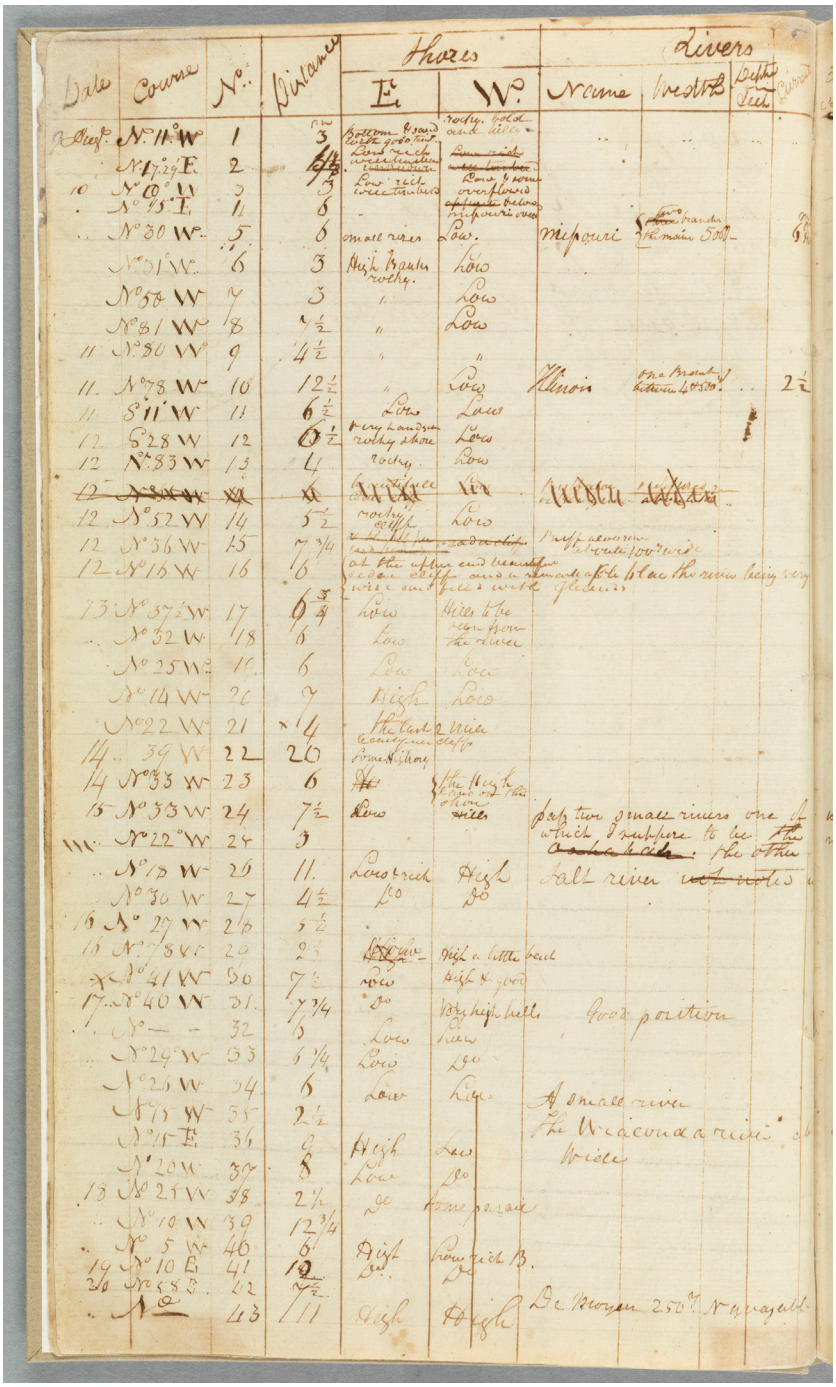


Figure 20: A page of travers tables from Pike's notebook. Courtesy National Archives.

Scientifically and geographically, Pike's journals broke little new ground. Weeks before his departure Pike admitted that he lacked "the qualifications of a naturalist." *Expeditions* contained detailed accounts of buffalo, elk, and other animals, as well as an enduring portrayal of the southern Great Plains as a vast desert suitable only for sparse settlement. Yet the "astronomical observations, meteorological tables, and. . .remarks on minerals, plants, &c" confiscated by Salcedo left Pike to rely on his journal to "supply part of the balance." The expedition's middling scientific results cannot simply be traced to Pike's lack of training as a naturalist or his missing papers. As geographer John Logan Allen writes, Pike— "possessing little real scientific knowledge of the area he was about to traverse, supplied with faulty maps, provided with misleading (and perhaps illegal) instructions, and proving loyal to a commander who did not deserve his loyalty"—was ill-prepared to lead a successful military expedition (let alone a scientific one).

The maps featured in *Expeditions* highlighted another shortcoming of Pike's documentation. Lacking the explorer's confiscated field notebook, Pike's cartographer had to reconstruct the expedition's route mostly from the traverse tables (Figure 20)—day-by-day accounts of mileage, direction, weather, and other ephemera—that Pike smuggled out of Mexico. It should thus come as no surprise that Pike's published maps include what one historian describes as "a stylized and imaginary Platte," "three affluents of the Kansas based on no data whatever," and an entirely misplaced Yellowstone River. While Pike successfully located the headwaters of the Arkansas, and South Platte, rivers, he erred greatly in their relation to other geographic features. These cartographic miscues can be attributed to incomplete source information, and a liberal plagiarism of other flawed maps (Figure 21)—which, like Pike's, operated under the assumption that the great rivers of the continent's interior all rose from a single height of land. *Expeditions*'s maps were imperfect (Figure 22). But, taken together with Pike's published journals—especially the volume's appendices—they represented the United States' clearest picture yet of the vast space between St. Louis, Santa Fe, the Platte River, and the Rio Grande. They also provide a clear glimpse of the limits of American cartographic knowledge, one of the primary motivating forces behind Jeffersonian-era expeditions like Pike's.

Figure 21: Alexander von Humboldt, "A map of New Spain, from 16 degrees to 38 degrees North latitude reduced from the large map" (1804). This image shows a detail of Alexander von Humboldt's map of New Spain, which Pike almost certainly consulted before his journey. Notice that Humboldt's Red River (Rio Rojo) begins east of Taos--which may explain Pike's difficulty finding it. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Figure 22: Zebulon Pike, "Map of the Internal Provinces of New Spain." Published as part of his journals in 1810, this map reflected the general course of his journey while also borrowing liberally from other contemporary maps. Courtesy David Rumsey Map Collection. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Pike and Mexican Independence

Pike's *Expeditions* also contained some knowledge that, while less scientific in nature, was potentially more valuable—especially given the rivalry between Spain and the United States. "As individuals," he wrote, the Spaniards were "the most hospitable generous and friendly People I never know"; their leaders and government officials, however, were "Tyronical [sic]; Hypocritical; an[d] Superstitious." This narrative of good citizens held back by a restrictive government became one of his favorite themes. The journals also featured speeches, letters, and—most importantly—three essays on New Spain, which contained detailed information on political organization, military might, economy, geography, culture, and even Indigenous inhabitants of the northern provinces of New Spain. Overall, Pike painted the clearest picture yet of northern New Spain and the discontents of its citizens.

Once Pike was safely back at Natchitoches, he could do little to occasion an uprising against Spanish rule; however, he could certainly inspire Americans to dreams about free trade with New Spain—a veritable impossibility under the crown's restrictive policies. In his journals, Pike seemed to be advocating for US intervention, noting that "Twenty thousand auxiliaries from the United states, under good officers, joined to the *independents* of the country, are at any time sufficient to create and effect the revolution." Coincidentally, Pike's *Expeditions* was published in 1810, the same year that the war for Mexican independence began. No doubt his conversations with leading citizens of New Spain convinced him that a revolution was imminent—for example, his acquaintance with a young priest "who was extremely anxious for a change of government."

Pike's published journals contained useful information for anyone looking to access New Spain's markets, including an explanation of the available routes to Santa Fe or a description of the province's untapped economic potential. The volume also contained some hard data about what Pike describes as the "cheapness of provisions" in New Mexico as well as the "extreme dearness of imported goods"; for example, New Mexicans paid twenty dollars (or more) for a yard of fine imported cloth. One historian estimates that this excerpt "was read or known by every trader who set out from the United States to New Mexico," especially after Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla's *Grito de Dolores* in September 1810 signaled the start of Mexico's war for independence.

Pike's Legacy

The publication of Pike's journals predated that of Lewis and Clark's by four years, but this fact alone did not necessarily earn him the praise he desired. Initially, *Expeditions* was received positively. Joseph Ballenger (one of Pike's sergeants) and John Graham (a State Department official) dubbed Pike's versions of accounts "correct." Secretary of War Dearborn acknowledged that Pike and his men "performed. . .laborious and dangerous expeditions"—a phrase used by Pike's supporters in their quest for extra compensation for the explorer and his men. British publisher Thomas Rees, who produced a reworked and better proofread version in 1811, asserted Pike's "great importance to geographical science." The only existing literary review of *Expeditions*, however, was less effusive. In 1814 an anonymous reviewer in Philadelphia's *Analectic Magazine* argued that some aspects of Pike's expedition had since become irrelevant, owing to the political changes—especially the relationship between Spain and the United States—wrought by the War of 1812. The reviewer continued, noting that Pike's work not only offered little scientific merit but also failed as an adventure story (owing largely to poor grammar and a somewhat boring writing style). The journals may have been translated into other languages, but they did not have their desired effect of earning Pike and his men extra pay and land.

Despite this lack of recognition, Pike and his men proved to be harbingers of a commercial onslaught that would bond New Mexico to the United States. From 1812 to 1821, a variety of American traders reached Santa Fe, many of them—in the words of Santa Fe Trail merchant Josiah Gregg—"following the directions of Captain Pike." (The Spanish memory of Pike's incursion had not yet faded, and many subsequent American arrivals faced arrest and imprisonment upon reaching Santa Fe.) The first legal trade between New Mexico and the United States occurred in 1821, when Missourian William Becknell—allegedly using Pike's journals—made his way to Santa Fe; upon arrival, he was welcomed by none other than Facundo Melgares, the last Spanish and first Mexican governor of New Mexico. If Becknell can credibly be called the "Father of the Santa Fe Trail," Pike may be one of the trail's grandfathers. Indeed, when Pike was first apprehended by Spanish forces, he was carrying what scholars have called the first sketch of the Santa Fe Trail. Four years after Becknell's journey, President James Monroe ordered a survey of the Santa Fe Trail (Figure 23).

Despite his disappointing reception back home, Pike remained a military man (ascending to the rank of brigadier general) until his death during the War of 1812. Although initially remembered for giving his life in battle, Pike's expeditions—especially his second—gradually came to dominate popular memory of his exploits. He is memorialized in the names of many towns, counties, parks, and other public spaces. Perhaps his most famous legacy, though, is Pike's Peak—which he did not actually climb. It is a fittingly anticlimactic tribute to an explorer often obscured by Lewis and Clark's long shadows, someone whose motives and overall significance remain the subject of historical debate.

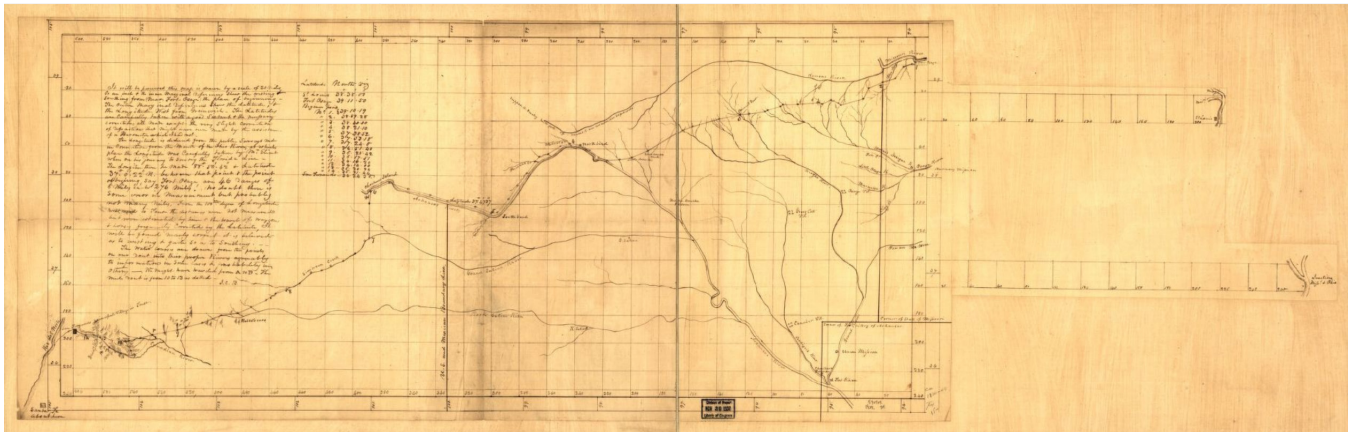


Figure 23: A map produced by George Sibley's 1825 survey of the Santa Fe Trail (ordered by President James Monroe). Courtesy Library of Congress.

FINDINGS REGARDING THE ROUTE

Based on historical research, the study team concludes that the proposed Pike NHT meets the first set of requirements under Criterion 11A: it is established by historic use, which is notable enough to be evaluated under Criterion 11B (which deals with national significance). Regarding the second facet of Criterion 11A, the NPS finds that the trail is sufficiently known to permit evaluation of the potential for public recreation and historical interest.

*The trail **does** meet Criterion 11A for designation as the Pike National Historic Trail.*

CRITERION 11B

It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

As stated in Public Law 116-9, SEC. 2504, the period of significance for the proposed Pike NHT is between 1806 and 1807.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The National Trails System Act (NTSA) states—in Section 5(b)(11)—that NHTs "must be of *national significance* with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had *a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture*. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included." Clearer expressions of the "broad facets" mentioned above can be found in the NPS Thematic Framework. Since the mid-20th century, the NPS has operated under one of a series of thematic criteria, most recently revised in 1994. The Pike study team has identified the following thematic criteria from said framework as potentially applicable to Pike's southwestern expedition:

<u>Theme I: Peopling Places</u>

- Topics 5 (ethnic homelands) and 6 (conquest, conflict, and colonization)

Pike's expedition was a product of the unique geopolitical circumstances of his time, in which both Spain *and* the United States attempted to establish dominion over the middle of the continent. Powerful Americans like James Wilkinson, Pike's superior and the nation's highest-ranking military officer, knew that the Indigenous

peoples of the Great Plains were key to establishing sovereignty over the disputed portions of Louisiana Territory; thus, Wilkinson ordered Pike to meet with Osages, Kansas, Pawnees, and Comanches. Pike spent a fairly long time amongst both the Pawnees and Osages, but his presence in their villages did not constitute any kind of turning point in the tribes' relationships with Spaniards, the United States, or each other. Opinions vary, for instance, on whether Pike succeeded in brokering peace between the Osages and the Kansas; furthermore, Pike's symbolic victory while with the Pawnee (getting them to raise an American flag and take down a Spanish one) likely represented little more than his hosts' savvy attempt to play Spain and the United States against one another—a method by which many Indigenous nations asserted power over European Americans.

Pike's maps and journals belong to a long line of accounts that piqued American curiosity about the Southwest. This momentum towards westward movement—across the Appalachians, for example—had existed long before Pike, and it would take new forms (and reach new feverish heights) more than three decades after his death. It is important, however, not to downplay the novelty of Pike's expedition. Taken into a comfortable captivity by Spanish forces, Pike gained access to a world that few Americans had glimpsed. The maps and journals that resulted from his travels through northern New Spain proved useful in determining international boundaries, first between the US and Spain (finalized in 1819) and later between the US and Mexico (1828). Yet despite producing volumes of information—about subjects as varied as climate, geography, Spanish military strength, and Indigenous lifeways—Pike's actions along the proposed Pike NHT did not change the geopolitical quandary posed by the Louisiana Purchase's vague boundaries. Pike may have hinted at growing political unrest in northern New Spain, but he did not directly influence the course of events regarding Mexican independence. Pike's orders directed him to parts of northern New Spain that would later become parts of the United States, but he did not have any direct effect upon the Mexican American War. In other words, while Pike is part of the larger historical arc of US colonization of the Great Plains and the Southwest, he did not have an outsized effect on either of these processes—thus falling short of the bar for national significance established by the NTSA.

Theme III: Expressing Cultural Values

- Topics 1 (educational and intellectual currents), 3 (literature), 4 (mass media), and 6 (popular and traditional culture)

Most students likely first encounter Pike's name in the context of Lewis & Clark, Thomas Jefferson, or the Louisiana Purchase—all essential elements of the context surrounding Pike's southwestern expedition (which generally receives far more attention than his expedition up the Mississippi River). Yet Pike's name is not confined to history books. His moniker graces one of the American West's most iconic peaks, one he never actually summited. John C. Frémont began using the name in the 1840s in documentation of his exploratory missions around the Rocky Mountains. The name came into wider use in the late 1850s during the Colorado Gold Rush, also known as the Pike's Peak Gold Rush. The United States Geological Survey made the name official in 1890. Interestingly, earlier attempts to name the mountain James Peak—after Edwin James, who in 1820 became the first known person to reach the summit—did not succeed. Because of his death in battle in the War of 1812, Pike's name graces hundreds of less prominent locations across the country: dams, towns, counties, national forests, and more.

As the nineteenth century wore on, many admiring accounts of Pike's deeds surfaced. A more sober assessment arrived in 1895 when Elliot Coues, editor of a well-received volume of Lewis and Clark's journals, published Pike's complete journals (including correspondence and exhaustive annotations). Around the centennial of his expedition in 1906, cities along his route held their own celebrations of Pike. Yet that same year, a historian named Isaac Cox revived the charges of aiding Wilkinson and Burr that had plagued Pike at the end of his expedition. Authorial views of

Pike seesawed throughout the twentieth century, with some echoing Cox's criticisms (or worse) and others defending Pike as an overtasked officer trying to do his best. Given his mixed results and the lingering controversy regarding Wilkinson and Burr, the legacy of Pike's southwestern expedition remains ambiguous to this day.

Unfortunately, the main source of Pike's notoriety—Pikes Peak—is of little use in clarifying the expedition's legacy. Place names have their own histories, and thus speak mostly to the eras in which they were bestowed. Although his name graces a well-known mountain, Pike's legacy and historical significance have changed over time; in fact, momentum is building behind a proposal to change the name of Pikes Peak to *Tava* (the Ute word for 'mountain'). Despite Pike's name recognition, his legacy remains ambiguous and his cultural relevance debatable—thus falling short of the bar for national significance established by the NTSA.

Theme V: Developing the American Economy

• Topics 3 (transportation and communication), 6 (exchange and trade), and 7 (governmental policies and practices)

Pike's association with the Santa Fe Trail is undeniable. From the Great Bend of the Arkansas (present-day southwestern Kansas) and into what is now Colorado—some 200 miles total—Pike's expedition followed what would become the Mountain Route of the Santa Fe Trail. Furthermore, when he was captured by Spanish forces, he was carrying what Pike scholar Donald Jackson refers to as "the Santa Fe Trail map"—essentially the first known map to predict the broad outlines of the famous trade route. Likely drawn before he set out, it does not show his own course, nor does it document what he would have personally observed; thus, as historian Donald Jackson notes, the "Santa Fe Trail map" was likely "based on information received from earlier travelers." This points to a crucial truth about Pike: he was not the first American to reach Santa Fe, and—although his journals were an important source of *printed* information, cartographic and otherwise—they were by no means the first source of information available to Americans wishing to access New Mexico's markets. While his journals likely whetted appetites for trade with Santa Fe, those appetites had existed for many years prior.

Subsequent American traders that reached Santa Fe before 1821—some of them using Pike's journals and maps as guides—faced indefinite imprisonment in New Spain. It was only after Mexico won independence in 1821 that American traders (first among them William Becknell) were received warmly in Santa Fe, and legal commerce between Mexico and the US began in earnest. Interestingly, the man who received Becknell—Facundo Melgares, the last Spanish and first Mexican governor of New Mexico—was a good friend of Pike's who had also served as his military escort during his captivity. Pike's friendship with Melgares may be part of the reason that Becknell received a warm welcome, but geopolitical circumstances (namely Mexico's independence from Spain) offer a more likely explanation. It is important to note that, while Pike documented growing political tensions in northern New Spain, he did nothing to further the cause of Mexican independence. Therefore, Pike's expedition did not constitute a singular event with regards to either the available information about Santa Fe *or* the diplomatic conditions necessary for the beginning of the Santa Fe Trail—thus falling short of the bar for national significance established by the NTSA.

Theme VI: Expanding Science & Technology

- Topic 3 (scientific thought and theory)

The maps accompanying Pike's journals were the first published maps of the Southwest to portray information gathered firsthand by American explorers. This information helped Pike's cartographer create an especially accurate picture of the explorer's route; in fact, one can find Pike's representation of the Southwest in many subsequent maps—including those of William Clark, whose map of the western North American interior remained highly influential into the 1840s. Pike left other scientific legacies, as well. He compared the Great Plains to vast deserts, which influenced

attitudes about the continent's grasslands for many years. He penned vivid descriptions of Great Plains fauna, such as bison and prairie dogs. He also located (and correctly identified) the headwaters of the Arkansas and South Platte rivers.

However, his maps erred in the location of other rivers, especially—as Donald Jackson writes—"a stylized and imaginary Platte" and "three affluents of the Kansas based on no data whatsoever." Pike's maps also greatly foreshortened the region between the headwaters of the Yellowstone and the Arkansas/Rio Grande. This clustering of the rivers of the northern and southern plains highlights an important geographic theory of Pike's time, which held that the great rivers of the continent's western interior all arose from a single height of land. Pike was not the only explorer whose orders hinged upon this idea; indeed, on their trip through the northern reaches of the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark also kept an eye out for this promontory. Despite their numerous errors, Pike's maps remain important examples of this era in geographic thought (which, with Pike's help, would persist for many years).

Pike's maps also offer insight into the difficulties of early-nineteenth-century cartography. The sketch maps he made between the Great Bend of the Arkansas and the stockade on the Conejos were taken by his Spanish captors; thus, his traverse tables (compilations of heading, distance, and various remarks on the surrounding terrain) served as the primary sources for the second and third maps accompanying his journals—"A Chart of the Interior Part of Louisiana" and "The Internal Provinces of New Spain." While these tables provided information on Pike's route itself, they did not offer much with regard to the expedition's larger geographic context. Pike's cartographer filled in the gaps by borrowing liberally from contemporary maps, particularly the work of the Prussian explorer/naturalist Alexander von Humboldt and Nicholas King (who produced manuscript maps based on information gathered by both the Lewis & Clark and Dunbar & Hunter expeditions). Yet this is how mapping worked in the nineteenth century, and traces (or wholesale pieces) of Pike's cartographic vision can be found in subsequent maps, as well. Overall, Pike's maps are best seen as incremental steps toward a more complete picture of a region that had long been shrouded in secrecy. They remained useful for future cartographers, but—due to their numerous errors and derivative nature—Pike's maps did not have a lasting effect on American scientific thought and theory, thus falling short of the bar for national significance established by the NTSA.

<u>Theme VIII: Changing Roles of the United States in the World Community</u>

- Topics 1 (international relations) and 3 (expansionism and imperialism)

Expeditions like Pike's are often perceived as milestones in the westward expansion of the United States. While Pike's travels produced useful information about the large, disputed portions of Louisiana Territory and northern New Spain, his use of the trail did not have a singular effect on the geopolitical situation at large. Tensions between the United States and New Spain remained, their border to remain unresolved until 1819. While Pike may have documented tensions in northern New Spain, he had no direct effect on the fight for Mexican independence. And while Pike ambitiously attempted to insert himself into the Indigenous politics of the Great Plains, he instituted no lasting change in his nation's relationship with the Indigenous powers in the middle of the continent; indeed, his small party must have looked inconsequential compared to Facundo Melgares's columns of Spanish troops that preceded him among the Pawnees. Importantly, Pike did not meet with the Comanches, whose devastating raids of northern Mexico paved the way for US expansion into the Southwest in the 1840s.

Pike's expedition was intended to strengthen American claims to the Louisiana Purchase—particularly the expansive American interpretation of the deal. Yet while Pike reinforced Spanish paranoia about a possible American invasion, his use of the route offered little immediate clarification of the United States' borders. Pike was an astute

chronicler of an important historical period, but he did little to influence the balance of power between the United States, Spain, and the Indigenous nations of the Great Plains Likewise, he had no direct impact on the major milestones of American expansion in the 1840s— thus falling short of the bar for national significance established by the NTSA.

NTSA and NHL Criteria

Though not mandated in the NTSA, potential NHTs are commonly evaluated by another rubric, as well. The NTSA states that, when submitted, feasibility studies should also include "the recommendation of the Secretary of the Interior's National Park System Advisory Board as to the national historic significance based on the criteria developed under the Historic Sites Act of 1935." This sentence refers to the criteria used in determining National Historic Landmarks (NHLs). NHL criteria, which the Advisory Board uses to make its recommendations, have been used in feasibility studies to provide a more comprehensive assessment of national significance. Thus, the study team acknowledges that—while its first responsibility is to address the NTSA's standard of "a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture"—it is also important to address the NHL criteria. It is important to note, though, that NHLs and NHTs are very different kinds of resources. The relatively small number of NHTs speaks to the limited number of iconic long-distance historical trails, but it also highlights the specificity of the NTSA criteria; while NHL criteria require an association with historical events and processes, the NTSA mandates a direct connection between historic use of the trail and "a far-reaching effect of broad patterns of American culture."

Of the six NHL criteria, the criterion most applicable to the proposed Pike NHT is #1: *"Association [of the property] with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained."* The property in question here is Pike's route as a whole. As noted above, it is not enough for the proposed Pike NHT to be linked to important historical processes or events; by this logic, the route could be considered nationally significant with relation to events that happened long before (or after) Pike's expedition. In keeping with the NTSA, Pike's use of the route itself must have had "a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture."

Also meriting discussion is Criterion #2: *"Association with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States."* Zebulon Pike may or may not have been a nationally important military leader. A trail, however, does not meet the NTSA's definition of significance merely because a nationally significant person used the trail; that person must have engaged in acts of national significance along the trail.

NHTs must be established by historic use. As NPS historian John Sprinkle details in Reference Manual 45, this historic use "may be interpreted as an 'event' that has 'made a significant contribution to…or that outstandingly represent(s) the broad patterns of United States history'"—wording taken directly from NHL criterion #1 (quoted above). In the interest of meshing the NTSA and NHL criteria, the study team proposes that the applicable thematic criteria identified above (all dealing with Pike's historic use of the trail) can likewise be considered as the "events" mentioned in NHL criterion #1. Similarly, the thematic criteria above can also be used to determine whether Pike engaged in acts of national significance along the trail—the crux of NHL criterion #2.

Finally, the study team noted that many important features of Pike's southwestern expedition are already recognized on existing NHTs. Near the beginning of his expedition, Pike's route overlaps with the Lewis and Clark NHT, which Congress designated in 1978. Pike played a marginal role in the origin story of the Santa Fe NHT (designated in 1987), which connects Missouri to New Mexico; one of its branches parallels Pike's route for some 200 miles. Shortly after being apprehended on the Conejos River, Pike and his party traveled along south along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro—which was recognized as a national historic trail in

2000. For a short section north of Santa Fe, Pike's route leaves El Camino Real and follows the Old Spanish NHT (recognized in 2002). After leaving Chihuahua, Pike's escorts led him eastward along El Camino Real de los Tejas, recognized as a national historic trail in 2004.

Pike's presence along these corridors—especially those of the Santa Fe, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, and El Camino Real de los Tejas NHTs—is part of their historical narratives. For example, some 200 miles of Pike's route along the Arkansas River would later become part of the Santa Fe Trail, and his journal provided valuable information on New Mexico. Pike also traversed (with minor deviations) the length of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHT and El Camino Real de los Tejas NHTs, immersing himself in northern New Spain along the way. Yet ultimately, despite its connections to other nationally significant trails, the historic use of the proposed Pike NHT itself does not meet the NTSA's definition of national significance.

Findings

The study team's negative findings regarding the NPS thematic criteria above constitute negative findings for Criterion #1, #2, or any of the other NHL criteria. Therefore, the proposed Pike NHT fails to meet the benchmarks set by NHL and NTSA standards.

FINDINGS REGARDING NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The trail does not meet Criterion 11B for designation as the Pike National Historic Trail.

CRITERION 11C

It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under the category.

Potential for public recreational use and historical interest derives from several factors. These include the existence of actual trail resources and historic sites tied to the period of significance of the trail, including the presence of sections of the trail and sites with good integrity.

There exist a select few sites along the proposed Pike NHT that are truly important to the trail narrative. The study team identified NHLs near the trail whose period of significance overlaps that of Pike's expedition. The Native American sites most relevant to the expedition, the Carrington Osage Village and the Pike-Pawnee Village, were occupied by Indigenous groups for many years—with Pike representing a small historical footnote. Ironically, Pike's attempt to climb Pikes Peak was unsuccessful; he ended up atop a peak to the south, likely Mt. Rosa. Pike's Stockade, a reconstruction of the fort where Spanish forces intercepted the explorer, is the only site whose NHL status depends entirely upon Pike. The rest of the NHLs along the proposed route are mostly contemporaneous sites representing the Spanish colonial cityscapes Pike would have encountered during his journey.

The lack of NHLs focused on Pike's story negatively impacts the trail's interpretive potential. Pike's journal—the baseline source for developing interpretive material along the proposed Pike NHT—is filled with terse entries about weather, distance traveled, and the party's hunting luck (or lack thereof). Subsequent scholarship on Pike has provided different perspectives on his southwestern expedition, but it has not uncovered new sites relating to the trail narrative. Therefore, the historic use of the trail did not provide the study team with compelling stories at more than a few locations.

Desirability is a key factor in the feasibility study process. To this end, the public involvement in the feasibility study revealed some important information. Of the 14 public meetings hosted by National Trails (all held online), only 67 total people attended—an average of less than 5 attendees per session; by way of comparison, the National Trails

office's two most recent feasibility studies—the Butterfield Overland Trail and the Chisholm/Great Western Trail—attracted 252 and 326 total attendees, respectively. The study team also solicited public comment in other mediums. The trend of low public involvement also manifested in this regard, as the Butterfield Overland Trail and the Chisholm/Great Western Trail received 484 and 602 total comments, respectively; Pike received 252.

Of those that wrote in favor of designation, most cited Pike's status as a national hero as the reason for their opinion; ultimately, though, this study evaluates the historic use of the trail, and not the stature of the person(s) using it (see discussion of NHL Criterion #2, above). The legacies of Pike's fellow Jeffersonian explorers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, loomed large among respondents; if Lewis and Clark have a trail named after them, many reasoned, then Pike should, as well. Notably, very few pro-designation responses cited specific rationale for national, or even state-level, significance.

Not all comments expressed support for designation. Some comments conveyed concern that the proposed Pike NHT would negatively impact established National Historic Trails; comments in this vein suggested that Pike's story be told as part of interpretive efforts already underway along the Santa Fe, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, and/or El Camino Real de los Tejas NHTs. Many respondents opposed to designation questioned whether Pike's use of the trail was in fact nationally significant; two commenters singled out Lt. Facundo Melgares (Pike's Spanish escort during much of his time in captivity) as more worthy of commemoration. Other comments of this ilk noted that Pike traversed pre-existing routes, thus calling into question the exploratory value of his travels.

Notwithstanding some enthusiastic proponents, the low turnout numbers conveyed a lack of engagement in the public outreach portion of the feasibility study process. While much of this can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the subdued response could also indicate a lack of enthusiasm about Pike. These signs of public indifference, combined with the lack of compelling interpretive stories, have negative effects on the trail's feasibility, suitability, and desirability.

FINDINGS REGARDING PUBLIC RECREATION POTENTIAL

The NPS finds that the Pike Trail does not have sufficient potential for public recreational use or historical interest to meet criterion 11C of the National Trails System Act for designation as a national historic trail.

The trail does not meet criterion 11C for designation as the Pike National Historic Trail.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

The NPS has evaluated the national significance of the proposed Pike NHT as a national historic trail. The NPS has found that the trail was established by historic use and is historically significant as a result of that use; the route of the trail is also sufficiently known to permit evaluation of the potential for public recreation and historical interest (Criterion 11A). However, the NPS has found that the trail is not nationally significant during the period 1806-7 (Criterion 11B) and that it does not possess significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest (Criterion 11C).