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Navigating Boundaries: The Development of Lewis, Clark and Pike in the Historic Consciousness

Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate modern conceptions that have emerged regarding the Expeditions of Lewis and Clark, and Zebulon Pike. Instead of being thought of as separate enterprises, the article argues that these two expeditions should be jointly considered as outgrowths of an American expansionist ideology and that the expeditions are examples of this growing national interest in the West.

Keywords

Lewis, Clark, Pike, West, Exploration, Expedition

Navigating Boundaries: The Development of Lewis, Clark and Pike
By Andrew Ewing

Ever since their expeditions returned unscathed nearly two hundred years ago, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and Zebulon Pike have become central figures in the North American historical tradition. Yet while these two respective missions accomplished comparable objectives, and were recorded in similar ways by members of the parties, modern representations and portrayals of them differ greatly. Although the nearly mythical story of William Clark and Meriwether Lewis has been retold continuously through the years, Zebulon Pike instead has been tossed to the wayside. Pike's exclusion from this mainstream discussion was because of his alleged connection to the failed James Wilkinson-Aaron Burr Southwest Conspiracy of 1805-1806.

As Stephen Aron said, "the history of the American West has, in fact, become much more complicated than it was once."¹ In fact, an argument for a new historical trope focused on connections of Lewis, Clark and Pike, instead of the previous discourses that solely concentrated on them as two entirely separate entities, acts in concert with Aron's idea of a new sort of wrinkle in the historical tradition of the West.

Burr sought to gain control of a portion of land located in modern-day Texas, and accordingly to then secede from the United States. Burr then planned to form his own independent nation, supported by his new allies, the Spanish. Meanwhile Wilkinson, as Governor of the Louisiana Territory, was able to help supply and support Burr on the ground level. Burr even formally discussed the financing of such a conspiracy with the English minister, Anthony Merry. Burr reportedly stated that "he could induce the states west of the Appalachian Mountains to withdraw from the Union if \$500,000 were

¹ Stephen Aron, "What's West, What's Next," *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History*, 19 (2005): 22.

placed at his disposal and a British fleet of warships stood by the mouth of the Mississippi to help promote his designs.”² Since Burr had verbal discussions with other countries, it is clear that he was somewhat serious in his enterprises. Though the scheme was never formally connected to Pike, his personal reputation was ruined forever due to his sponsorship by Wilkinson.

Accordingly, this false linkage has also prevented Pike from achieving the same popularity that Lewis and Clark were been blessed with over the decades. Furthermore both of the expeditions have been incorrectly located by historians, and moved away from their true contexts. They have since been recreated over time either as important stories in the foundation of the mythical and heroic frontier (Lewis and Clark) or as cautionary tales about what could go wrong when too much power was entrusted in the hands of individuals on the frontier (Pike).

These expeditions together contributed extensively to the first public discussions of the American frontier. The newly purchased Louisiana Territory was at the time largely unknown and unexplored. Lewis, Clark and Pike all wrote at length in their journals about the new cultures they observed. The two expeditions also sent back samples of their discoveries, such as bear cubs and other plants and animals, to the East for public display. These physical representations helped to change the formerly unknown West and to create public awareness of a new frontier ethos. The specimens showed the country the strange creatures encountered on the frontier, instead of similar information and observations released for public consumption through books, pictures and other publications. As everyday reminders of an undeveloped land, the samples and

² W. Eugene Hollon, “Zebulon Montgomery Pike and the Wilkinson-Burr Conspiracy,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 91 (1947): 449.

published materials from the expeditions helped to foster thoughts and discussion of the frontier across the nation. Thus, it makes perfect sense that the nineteenth century saw increased migration to the western frontier, in part fomented by America's awareness and discovery of the western frontier as described by these early explorers.

Before any argument is made however, it is important to note that these expeditions were not the only expeditions of their era. Even though these two expeditions are among the most famous of the period, others also sought to explore western North America during the same time. There were a total of four or so main expeditions: the two aforementioned ones, another led by Sir William Dunbar and George Hunter, and a final one led by Thomas Freeman and Pete Custis. Dunbar and Hunter were the first to explore up the Red River in modern Arkansas. Unfortunately, their journey stalled because the boat they brought had too high of a draft. They basically continued to ground themselves as they traveled further and further upstream. The pair traveled to the Hot Springs area of Arkansas "studying the nearly 150-degree water, geological features, and plant and animal life of the area" before returning back southward towards their original departure point at Catherine's Landing and arriving there in early 1805.³

In mid-1806, Freeman and Custis were charged to continue the previously mentioned expedition up the Red River from Fort Adams (modern-day Natchez, Mississippi) and they actually accomplished a good deal. At least, until they ran into a force of 212 Spanish dragoons in modern-day Texas on July 29, 1806.⁴ After escaping what could have been an international incident, Freeman and Custis cautiously made

³ Jay H. Buckley, "Jeffersonian Explorers in the Trans-Mississippi West," in *Zebulon Pike, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, eds. Matthew L. Harris and Jay H. Buckley (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 111.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

their way back to their starting point. It is clear based upon these two expeditions that Jeffersonian Era exploration should be thought of as something more than just Lewis, Clark and Pike. Furthermore, the theme of American-Spanish standoffs was not solely limited to Freeman and Custis. This topic will be readdressed later in the paper alongside a discussion of Zebulon Pike.

To go from a larger introduction of period expeditions to a more micro-level requires in depth discussion of the two expeditions this thesis is centered on—Lewis and Clark and Pike. The Lewis and Clark Expedition left Illinois on May 14, 1804 with a sizeable party of about thirty members. During the next two years, the expedition methodically plodded its way westward, across unknown landscapes and eventually reached the Pacific Ocean in mid-November, 1805. The journey home went a bit quicker and the expedition returned to St. Louis on September 23, 1806. Despite untold dangers faced, the party lost only one man, Charles Floyd (who died of disease), during the more than two yearlong trek.

Meanwhile, the Pike Expedition began on July 15, 1806 and lasted until July 1, 1807; less than half the length of the Lewis and Clark led journey. This does not mean however that Pike and his men experienced anything less or that they should be studied at a reduced level. In fact, quite the opposite impression becomes evident. After leaving St. Louis, Pike traveled westward and discovered Pikes Peak (obviously an eponymous title), in late 1806 before he broke up his expedition into two groups. One traveled straight back to St. Louis, while the other carried on with Pike southward towards the headwaters of the Red River. Unfortunately, Pike did not have the navigational prowess needed to effectively navigate the new territory. Instead, he led his group on a long

looping path before eventually stumbling upon the Rio Grande in southern Colorado, which he wrongly assumed to be the Red River.

Pike then built a fort overlooking the river and set about gathering up the men who, due to hardships such as lack of food and supplies, had been unable to keep up with his expedition over the past few months. Eventually, Pike and his men were captured by the Spanish whose territory they had unknowingly entered and begun to wander across. The capture of Pike and his subsequent detention by the Spanish are two key issues. Generations of historians have argued about the true conditions that involved this specifically whether Pike purposely allowed himself to get detained. After a few months in captivity, during which his personal papers were confiscated, Spanish authorities let Pike and his men go, and escorted them back to Louisiana where their remarkable journey finally ended.

From the time when the first scholarship on the expeditions of Lewis and Clark and Pike appeared, historians have changed their analyses and interpretations of these events, changes that also reflected the larger perceptions of the expeditions sometimes amid wider geopolitical events. At the same time, new analysis was informed by a combination of old inquiry alongside developed historical trends. Despite the development of new ideas alongside advanced interpretative themes, historians have still been unable to effectively compare and contrast the modern popularity of Lewis and Clark in comparison to Pike. In other words, to explain why one has become a historically American trope of sorts, while the other has been seen as negative and almost as naturally un-American in its alleged actions and values (Pike's purported spying). Problematically, the field of history has been unable to effectively situate these

developments in the appropriate context. Though before this historiographical tradition is analyzed, a more complete picture of the expeditions is needed.

The primary sources of both the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Expedition of Zebulon Pike were preserved through publications shortly after the expeditions' returned. For each, there are two main sources of information available: letters that discuss all aspects of the expeditions from various points of view and cover decades ranging on both sides of the specific years of the journey's themselves, and journals written by various expedition leaders and members. Lewis and Clark's journey, however, did have more surviving sources. In addition to the journals and letters of Lewis and Clark, other soldiers also recorded their impressions. The most richly detailed one was that of Private Joseph Whitehouse. His journal provides another account, from one of the lowest ranking members of the party, to study alongside the generally accepted firsthand historical account of Lewis and Clark. Charles Floyd also recorded his observations; however his death in 1804 ended his journal and left it incomplete. On the other hand, Zebulon Pike's personal journal is the only one to survive from his expedition. This document has been regularly used by historians interested in Pike because so few other primary sources related to him have survived (his personal papers were even lost in a fire at the end of the nineteenth century).

Meanwhile the objectives of the respective expeditions were clearly articulated by their sponsors, Thomas Jefferson and James Wilkinson. After the United States negotiated the purchase of the Louisiana Territory in 1803, Jefferson chose to have it explored and mapped. Accordingly, he instructed Lewis that the object of "your mission is to explore the Missouri river" and to determine whether "any other river may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of

commerce.”⁵ From an official standpoint, Jefferson wanted to know the extent of the waterways in the newly acquired land, and their possible impact on both the internal and international system of trade of the United States.

Both expeditions were commissioned to accomplish similar if not identical goals that included the entering of positive relations with native populations, looking for important natural resources (animals and minerals), surveying the land, and noting the climate/weather alongside the explorers’ frequent geographical surveys. Jefferson’s instructions, for instance, went on to direct Lewis to make himself “acquainted” with the Native American tribes they were to encounter, and to present a positive view of the U.S. in these interactions. Additionally, Lewis was told to note “the animals of the country” along with the different geographic regions they inhabited, any minerals discovered while trekking, and the climate and weather.⁶ Wilkinson’s directive to Pike reads almost like an exact copy of Jefferson’s orders. In a letter to Pike, Wilkinson stated, “in the course of your tour, you are to remark particularly upon the geographical structure, the natural history, and population of the country through which you may pass, taking particular care to collect and preserve specimens of everything curious in the mineral or botanical worlds which can be preserved and are portable.”⁷

All three party leaders recorded their interactions and encounters. Like their objectives, these recordings help bolster the idea that the two expeditions were in fact tangibly connected to one another, and that Pike (with respect to both his journey and himself) should be thought of as an outgrowth of Lewis and Clark instead as a distinctive

⁵ Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, June 20, 1803, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*, ed. Donald Jackson (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 61.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, ed. Elliott Coues (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 564.

and separate entity. For instance, the explorers independently recorded their observations on Native Americans. Joseph Whitehouse⁸ described his encounter with the Mandan where they were joined by an “Indian Woman who was employed as interpreter to the Snake Nation of Indians.”⁸ Months before, Lewis had recalled meeting “a camp of Kickapoo Indians” who had left “with a promise of procuring us some provisions.”⁹ They later met back up with the Kickapoo and exchanged some whiskey for four deer. Since Lewis and Clark had also been instructed to form positive relations with the Indians, they actively pursued this policy in their interactions. On August 3, 1803, the journal recorded that a speech was made announcing to them (the Native Americans) “the change in government, our (the nation’s) future promises of protection, and advice as to their future conduct.”¹⁰ The expedition tried to have the Native Americans acknowledge and legitimize American expansion and land purchase. It is quite clear that Lewis and Clark ardently strove to uphold all of Jefferson’s directives.

Although his style was of a more detached and descriptive nature, Pike also frequently wrote about his contact with natives. On August 14, 1806 Pike recalled that they “passed a camp of Sacs, consisting of three men with their families. They were employed in spearing and scaffolding a fish, about three feet in length with a long flat snout.”¹¹ Pike also distanced himself a bit from the other expeditions in that he personally orchestrated land treaties with tribes. Although historians can reasonably assume that Lewis and Clark would have attempted to accomplish a similar sort of task.

⁸ Joseph Whitehouse, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition- The Journals of Joseph Whitehouse*, ed. Gary E. Moulton (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 8.

⁹ Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis & Clark*, ed. Nicholas Biddle (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1904), 39.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹¹ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, 5.

Pike accordingly noted in late September 1806 that the natives “gave me the land required, about 100,000 acres, equal to \$200,000” and that he “gave them presents to the amount of about \$200.”¹² Another time, Pike discussed his frustration with how long a council meeting was taking and especially with the effort he had to put in to achieve his desired result, which was most likely an agreement for the Native Americans to part with some of their land.¹³ While Pike was not above taking advantage of the Native Americans he encountered, on the whole he managed to treat them with respect, and even described them as “intelligent” in one journal entry.¹⁴

Other daily reflections dealt with the dual nature of surveyal and geographical endeavors of the expeditions. On Thursday, September 13, 1804, Lewis and Clark noted, “We made twelve miles to-day through a number of sandbars, which make it difficult to find the proper channel.” Most journal entries from both parties also included the approximate number of miles traveled by the particular expedition on that given day. Lewis and Clark kept their expedition on rivers and other waterways as long as possible, since the moving water acted in combination with the wind to expedite the distance possible to travel on a daily basis. As they traveled further away from American civilization, they also noted a change in the landscape they moved through—the hills on each side were now higher, “separated from the river by a narrow plain on its borders. In the north, these lowlands are covered in part with timber, and great quantities of grapes, which are now ripe.”¹⁵

¹² Ibid., 83.

¹³ Ibid., 171.

¹⁴ Ibid., 121.

¹⁵ Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis & Clark*, 117.

Pike detailed these sorts of events with the same basic structure and a nearly identical type of language. In one entry, he noted that “we ascended the river about six miles, and encamped on the south wide [*sic*] behind an island. Distance 6 miles.”¹⁶ On August 13, 1806, Pike stated that it was late “before we sailed; passed a vast number of islands; left one of our dogs on shore. Rained all day. Distance 27 miles.”¹⁷ Constant complaints about the rain became a common feature in the journals of both expeditions; it seemed as though the farther west they traveled, the more it rained and the colder the weather that was experienced. Pike, like Lewis and Clark, tried to stay on the rivers for as long as he could although he eventually had to steer his party towards overland travel. With this shift to land based movement came picturesque scenes that were eloquently described by Pike in his journal. He commented simply, stating that it was “one of the most sublime and beautiful inland prospects ever presented to the eyes of man. The prairie lying nearly north and south, was probably 60 miles by 45.”¹⁸ The Pike expedition had arrived in virgin territory. These sorts of published accounts by the expeditions lead to an increased interest in the frontier by East Coast residents and other possible internal migrants of the United States.

Pike’s journals featured more interesting tidbits of information than those from the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and readers can clearly discern Pike’s giddiness at some of the things he encountered. For instance, his entry from Sunday, September 29, 1806 read simply “I killed a remarkably large raccoon.”¹⁹ This story is almost comedic in its retelling. A few days later, Pike mentioned his experience with a new animal, stating

¹⁶ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, ed. Stephen Harding Hart and Archer Butler Hulbert (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 63.

¹⁷ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, 5.

¹⁸ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 169.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

that he caught “a curious little animal on the prairie, which my Frenchman termed a prairie mole, but it is very different from the mole of the States.”²⁰ Another time, Pike remembered seeing “a very beautiful fox, with red back, white tail and breast.”²¹ Such noteworthy animals were clear representations that the expedition had entered what was considered to be the American frontier. Nevertheless the expeditions were not all fun and games. The journeys themselves were arduous endeavors.

Lewis and Clark were much better provisioned and received more funding than Pike. This was probably due to the different levels of importance and prestige of each expedition’s sponsor, one a President (Jefferson) and the other a comparatively low-ranking territorial Governor (Wilkinson). Yet the journals are full of descriptions of the hardship endured by both parties. In fact, Whitehouse prefaced his story by stating that he hoped to convince his “readers that Manly fortitude and perseverance was our only guide.”²² Lewis and Clark complained that “the mosquitoes and other animals are so troublesome that mosquito biers or nets were distributed to the party,” as an attempt to combat this buzzing menace. At the same time, Pike once recounted that he “had become extremely weak and faint, it being the fourth day since we had received sustenance.”²³ One night was so cold that some spirits Pike had in a small keg “congealed to the consistency of honey.”²⁴ His expedition lived day-to-day and meal-to-meal at points, and therefore became much more dependent on hunting and fishing for their very survival than Lewis and Clark ever were. It is apparent that both expeditions experienced great hardships.

²⁰ Ibid., 97.

²¹ Ibid., 125.

²² Joseph Whitehouse, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition-The Journals of Joseph Whitehouse*, 6.

²³ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, 485.

²⁴ Ibid., 151.

It does not make any sense why Pike was given an expedition and put in charge in the first place; he was ill prepared to lead any expedition (especially one of such magnitude) and should never have been entrusted with such a mission by Governor Wilkinson. Pike could not even complete his objective of measuring the geographic track of the party because he simply did not know how to use the appropriate equipment. When Pike noted that “this day I obtained the angle between sun and moon, which conceived the most correct way I possessed of ascertaining the longitude” he was actually (and proudly) sharing an accomplishment, because he had no formal training in any field related to cartography or in the usage or practice of the observations necessary for longitudinal and latitudinal measurements.²⁵ Additionally, Pike was sent into the Great Plains without even having an experienced and competent frontiersman as a guide.

The modern view of the expeditions is overly romanticized; they are not the inherent successes history has labeled them as. In reality, these expeditions failed with respect to what they had originally been tasked with accomplishing. While Lewis and Clark were able to travel and map the water routes all the way to the Pacific Ocean, Lewis also noted in a letter to Jefferson that “we view this passage across the Continent as affording immense advantages to the fur trade, but fear that the advantages which it offers as a communication for the productions of the East (sic) Indies to the United States and thence to Europe will never be found equal on an extensive scale to that by way of the Cape of Good hope.”²⁶ They realized that any trading venture through the interior of the United States would lose time to a comparable ship sailing around

²⁵ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 163.

²⁶ Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, St. Louis, September 23, 1806, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*, 321.

Africa's Southern Coast. The shortcut that had been hoped for had been realized as something quite opposite, an even longer route. At the same time Pike basically wandered around the southwestern portion of the continent. At any given moment in time he had little idea where he was going or even what territory he was in.

Both of these journeys similarities need and deserve to be addressed by historians. Based upon their own recollections and entries, the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Expedition of Zebulon Pike should to be judged as extensions of one another, instead of as separate events related to the primary American foray into the West. Their journals were structured in similar ways and the expeditions themselves faced nearly identical charges and challenges during the course of their journeys. Since these expeditions were so similar, it does not make sense why their historical trajectories have been so different.

Before that is explained, it is important to note modern romantic notions that plague the historical conceptions of both expeditions. The Lewis and Clark Expedition has been romanticized to an almost Turnerian degree as its story has been discussed and dissected up through the present day. Most of these misrepresentations relate to Native Americans, especially Sacajawea. Meanwhile Pike's expedition has been forever intertwined with his alleged connection to spying for James Wilkinson and, therefore, his expedition as an extension of Aaron Burr's intentions as well.

While Jefferson did instruct the expedition to be friendly to natives, which for the most part did occur, he also asked them to do something else. Even though it was the early nineteenth century, Jefferson was already considering Indian removal as a viable option to expand and develop control over newly acquired U.S. territory. Consequently, he told Lewis and Clark to "induce the Inhabitants of Louisiana to relinquish their

landed possessions in that country, and removing with their families, except of an equivalent portion of lands on the East side of the Mississippi.”²⁷ This was clearly not the same type of removal program articulated and put into practice nearly three decades later by Andrew Jackson. Instead, Lewis and Clark were instructed to soften up the Native Americans in order to determine whether they would willingly move off their tribal lands. Of course, this was based upon a request made by a foreign power (the United States) who had not even gained control of their newly claimed territory until a few years before. Jefferson’s idea was more about removing the Indians to civilization, than any early rendering of Jacksonian intent. Even though stories such as this would be thought to induce changes in popular conceptions of the expedition, history has still refused to include these sorts of examples in its discussion of Lewis and Clark.

One other important subject deserves redress and discussion, that of the now famous Sacajawea. Her undeserved increase in popularity over the past few generations has overwhelmed and overshadowed her true contributions to the expedition.

Whitehouse and Lewis and Clark barely mention Sacajawea at all in their journals.

While it is true that she did not join the party until more than a year into its journey, she was briefly mentioned after her eventual inclusion. Yet this discussion is not to the same extent as her supposed historical connection to Lewis and Clark. Lewis noted in a letter to Jefferson, which mentioned the contributions of members of the party, that there was “a Shoshone Woman and child wife and Infant of Toust. Charbono [sic].”²⁸ In other words, no name, and no clarification of any sort of importance to the expedition; just the situation of Sacajawea as nothing more than the wife of a French-Canadian

²⁷ Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, Cahokia, December 28, 1803, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*, 148.

²⁸ Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, St. Louis, September 21, 1806, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents 1783-1854*, 317.

trader and party member. Whitehouse did one better, and actually mentioned her position in the party. He stated, “This Indian Woman was employed, as interpreter to the Snake Nation of Indians.”²⁹ Later on, Whitehouse mentioned her again as “our Interpreters Wife (the Indian woman).”³⁰ However, even Whitehouse’s characterization does not lend credence to our modern notion of Sacajawea. She was considered at best an interpreter, and at worse, a mother with a child who was only there because she was married to an interpreter. Historians should ask themselves how the fascination with Lewis and Clark has been magnified to include Sacajawea and removed her from the importance she was associated with by members of the expedition itself. If the firsthand accounts do not even mention her by name, then where has this historical love affair come from?

The Pike Expedition has also experienced historical revisionism but unlike Lewis and Clark, the reconstruction done unto Pike has not been of a positive nature. Even though Governor Wilkinson sent Pike to explore the Southwest, it has been alleged that Pike’s job detailed more than just recording his experiences. Ever since his expedition returned from its captivity by Spanish officials in modern-day New Mexico, historians and citizens alike have been debating whether Pike spied for Wilkinson, and whether his implication as a member of the Southwest Conspiracy is a valid one.

As Elliott Coues argued, Pike was a man of ambition, but this yearning was for prestige and not power.³¹ Unlike Meriwether Lewis who sought to publish his journals for profit, Pike “seems to have written about them for glory more than profit.”³² His

²⁹ Joseph Whitehouse, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition-The Journals of Joseph Whitehouse*, 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

³¹ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, xxi.

³² Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 27.

characteristics do not fit a man accused of spying with anti-American intentions. His country meant more to him than nearly anything else in the world. Prior to his death fighting for the U.S. during the War of 1812, Pike told his son two things: to “first, preserve your honor free from blemish” and secondly to “be always ready to die for your country.”³³ These maxims hardly seem like those of a man who had turned against his nation.

Yet one of Pike’s own entries puts even more doubt into this debate. On December 23, 1806, Pike wrote during a particularly tough day that “Never did I undergo more fatigue, performing the duties of hunter, spy, guide, commanding officer, etc.”³⁴ While Pike’s characterization of himself as a spy may be nothing more than a word choice, it still bears looking into. In fact, Pike may have actually thought of himself as a spy for America. In a national sense, Pike would be justified in assuming this role because of the issues that the Spanish, especially those located on the southern border, presented for the United States.

On the other hand, it seems clear that Wilkinson did take advantage of Pike in selecting him to travel west. Before this selection, Pike had not “been distinguished from any other meritorious and zealous subaltern.”³⁵ He had engaged in a smaller expedition the year before to explore the lower regions of the Arkansas River, so it appears as though Wilkinson’s decision was partially based upon Pike’s previous successes. At the same time however, it has already been proven how ill prepared and inexperienced Zebulon Pike actually was. Therefore, it seems plausible that Wilkinson noticed an up-and-coming young officer, and took him under his wing for his own

³³ Ibid., 17.

³⁴ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, 129.

³⁵ Ibid., xxii.

purposes. Unfortunately, there seems to be few accurate characterizations of Pike in the historical record so any evaluation as such would be pure conjecture. Whether or not Pike was actually a spy should not be a focus of the historical community.

Up until now, no historian has been able to effectively explain why Pike was tossed aside in the American consciousness when his story was so alike that of Lewis and Clark. There had not even been historical analysis done comparing the expeditions; scholars had either concentrated on one or the other, and overlooked the necessary questions that should have been answered long ago. Namely, how such similar circumstances took such divergent paths in the long historical tradition of the past two hundred years. Furthermore, there has been no connection made between the watershed moment that changed Pike's public perception, his connection with the Southwest Conspiracy, and the different modern-day representations of Lewis, Clark and Pike.

The first look into these expeditions was nothing more than a passing reference in Frederick Jackson Turner's famous *Frontier Thesis* which was published in 1896. Turner articulated his idea of the closed frontier as a metaphor for the nationalizing character of the West itself. For Turner, the frontier created an individuality and ruggedness that became an inherent part in the destruction of the immigrant and the recreation of a distinctly American idea in the form of the pioneer. In terms of early exploration, Turner barely mentioned Lewis, Clark or Pike and instead appeared content to simply state that "each expedition was an epitome of the previous factors in western advance."³⁶ Turner's depiction of the frontier was an extremely romanticized

³⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 17.

concept—he called for man to “Stand at the Cumberland Gap and watch the procession of civilization, marching single-file—the buffalo, following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer—and the frontier has passed by.”³⁷ This statement exemplified Turner’s idea of the closed and dead Western frontier...one created by settlement and ironically not exploration. Perhaps this explains why such important expeditions, necessary to the expansion of American sovereignty and ideals, were so ignored by Turner in his thesis.

In the decades immediately following Turner’s presentation, other historians began to take a distinctly Turnerian approach to the study of the West. In 1906, G. Mercer Adam discussed Lewis and Clark through a romantic lens as makers of American history. His view of the expedition was the classically heroic representation frequently found in historical works written in the early twentieth century. For example, Adam said “well did its members earn the glory which was theirs, on the return of the party to civilization.”³⁸ Adam also described Lewis and Clark as “two men, singularly loyal to each other and to the task...assigned to them.”³⁹ This is a positive view on the expedition that concentrated on the key emotional attachments between its members—Adam tended to ignore the progress of the journey in its own context, and described it in a larger sense alongside the development of US history itself.

Since Adam concentrated on the expedition through a national perspective, he also made sure to note the impact of President Jefferson on Lewis and Clark’s quest, and his instructions to the men to develop positive and friendly relations with the Native Americans. Adam could have just as easily compared Pike on these same lines to Lewis

³⁷ Ibid., 4.

³⁸ G. Mercer Adam, *The Makers of American History- Lewis & Clark and Fremont* (New York: The University Society, Inc., 1905), 189.

³⁹ Ibid., 13.

and Clark—Pike was not awarded any money by Congress (unlike the Lewis and Clark Expedition's member) and experienced relatively little of the glory that he yearned for. To avoid what seems to be such a clear comparison seems to indict Adam as a historian, as does his romantic notion of Lewis and Clark. Though the time period in which he worked probably contributed to the latter notion.

At the same time, F.G. Young wrote an article on the "The Higher Significance in the Lewis and Clark Exploration" that also looked at Lewis and Clark through a national lens. Young's work seems like almost a companion piece to Adam's; Young also emphasized the "purposed step toward securing this continent for the home of freedom and good-will."⁴⁰ In other words, Young described the extension of the nation, in all of its auspices, westward. Additionally, during this time the United States pursued an isolationist foreign policy. This view can be seen in Young's reinterpretation, his repeated rehashing of Jefferson's desire to set up the American nation as a country free from foreign entanglements. Although, if Young was intent on discussing Jeffersonian expansion, he should have at least mentioned Pike in his analysis.

Since Zebulon Pike's expedition occurred from 1806 to 1807, its centennial was celebrated from 1906 through 1907. Therefore it makes sense that out of this timely rediscovered popularity, historians began to seriously pay attention to the topic for the first time. Perhaps the first article to appear was Herbert Bolton's "Papers of Zebulon M. Pike, 1806-1807." Unfortunately, Bolton ignored the expedition itself and instead concentrated on an analysis of Pike's papers. He specifically looked into whether or not Pike purposely allowed himself to be captured by Spanish authorities on the orders of

⁴⁰ F.G. Young, "The Higher Significance in the Lewis and Clark Exploration," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 6 (1905), 2.

General Wilkinson as one part of his ill-fated alliance with Aaron Burr to siphon off part of the Western United States in order to create an independent republic and did not reach any real conclusion on this matter.

Forty years passed before another historian wrote anything substantive about Pike—in the late 1940s, W.E. Hollon came out with a series of articles looking at the expedition. His first was the 1947 article “Zebulon Montgomery Pike’s Lost Papers,” which detailed the difficulties in rediscovering Pike’s papers after they had been lost during his capture and later imprisonment by Spanish authorities. According to Hollon, the renewed interest in the relocation of his papers during the first part of the twentieth century occurred because they were wanted as part of a centennial exhibit on Pike.

Hollon’s other piece, one of the first articles to look specifically into Pike’s Expedition, came out two years later; although it does concentrate on Pike’s Mississippi Expedition of 1805-1806 and not his more famous Southwestern one from a year later. This research described the scientific and geographical aspects of Pike’s first expedition, and stated “it is not an understatement to say that little additional knowledge in this respect was gained.”⁴¹ The articles by Hollon are an important breakthrough, because of their critical analysis of Pike. They depict him as a human instead of continuing the previous heroically mythical depictions of the explorers seen in earlier historical analysis.

The next spate of articles on these two expeditions occurred nearly two decades later, and commenced with T.M. Pearce’s discussion of the ‘Other’ frontiers in the American West. Pearce’s article from 1962 read like a post-modern critique of Turner

⁴¹ W.E. Hollon, “Zebulon Montgomery Pike’s Mississippi Voyage, 1805-1806,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 32 (1949), 454.

which, given the time it was written (in the 1960s), would make sense. Pearce concentrated on addressing what Turner ignored, and ended up with a harsh indictment of Turner's failings. Accordingly, the "American frontier as described by Turner and explored by his many disciples has its intellectual limits."⁴² Pearce argued instead that both historians and students alike need to look at the frontier and its development from the other side of the spectrum for "only as one begins to understand the pattern in reverse can the Anglo-American frontier become clear in its...substance."⁴³ That is, from facing back east instead of looking toward the west. For some reason though, Pearce did not think it was necessary to include any discussion of borderlands as other frontiers in his work; if he had, perhaps he would have been able to locate Pike in this larger contextual discussion.

During this decade (the 1960s) however other historians returned to the Turnerian approach. In his book Tales of the Frontier—From Lewis and Clark to the Last Roundup, Everett Dick called the Turner Thesis a classic America document. Dick neglected to situate the Lewis and Clark expedition in relation to his perspective, and instead emphasized the contact between settlers and both Native Americans and their (the settlers') environment. When discussing Lewis and Clark, Dick emphasized their interactions with Native Americans by stating that they were laying the groundwork for the Americans who would soon follow. He said, "Unless the American traders were able to supply the Indians, the government would lose its influence over the tribes and the Northwest frontier would be in serious jeopardy."⁴⁴ Interestingly, Dick moved away from the critical analysis evident in Pearce's work of the same decade. He also missed

⁴² T.M. Pearce, "The 'Other' Frontiers of the American West," *Arizona and the West* 4 (1962), 106.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴⁴ Everett Dick, *Tales of the Frontier—From Lewis and Clark to the Last Roundup* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 17.

out on an inclusion of Pike in his analysis; since his title intimated that his discussion would encompass the entire scope of frontier history, it would have made perfect sense to include Pike because Pike clearly had the same sorts of dealing with Native Americans as Lewis and Clark.⁴⁵

One year later in 1964, Dale Van Every continued the trend of frontier writing in his The Final Challenge: The American Frontier 1804-1845. This book returned to the nationalist perspective of the Expedition of Lewis and Clark first articulated by G. Mercer Adam nearly sixty years before. Van Every also concentrated on situating Lewis and Clark in a battle versus the wild and uncharted mysteriousness of the west. Accordingly, their survival of this endeavor was a herculean task based upon monumental effort. When they finally returned, Van Every described Lewis and Clark as erecting “a great arch of American sovereignty extending over the plains and mountains from the headwaters of the Mississippi to the shores of the Pacific.”⁴⁶ For Van Every, the expedition’s goal was to map out the Louisiana Purchase, but it also accomplished something else entirely—Lewis and Clark were able to successfully lay the groundwork for the westward surge of pioneers during the next half-century. What started out as an expedition of frontiersmen became an inherently American journey, where the frontier ideals of these first explorers were recast in the Americans who later ventured west themselves. Yet Van Every took the popular route and only mentioned Lewis and Clark, instead of any of the other expeditions that also sought to chart the frontier. Notably, Pike faced even greater hardships and challenges than Lewis and

⁴⁵ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, 83.

⁴⁶ Dale Van Every, *The Final Challenge: The American Frontier 1804-1845* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), 68.

Clark, and thus could easily have been included as a companion expedition to Lewis and Clark in Van Every's critical lens.

During the 1960s, the topical analysis shifted to cover the original purposes of early nineteenth century expeditions. While these analyses do not directly reference Lewis, Clark and Pike, they provide an important historical context for the events of the expeditions that were previously detailed. The article in question by Herman Friis, delivered, just as its title insinuates, "A Brief Review of the Development and Status of Geographical and Cartographical Activities of the United States Government" from 1776 to 1818. While Friis does not mention Lewis and Clark, he did discuss the original intents and purposes of Pike's Expedition by stating that it was "one of the most significant of several of these western exploring expeditions" (under Thomas Jefferson) and that Pike's maps are landmarks "in the history of exploration."⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that Friis purposefully left out the story of Lewis and Clark even though they were equally as important in the mapping of the United States. This may be because of the fact that Friis only mentions explorers/cartographers who ventured into what was considered the United States at the point when they were doing their travels. Accordingly, this would then leave out Lewis and Clark because their journeys took them outside what was legitimately considered to be the United States at the time. If this was the case however, Freeman, Dunbar, Hunter and Custis all deserved equal mention since the routes they journeyed on were clearly located inside the boundaries of the nation. These two expeditions were also both directly sponsored by Jefferson, and therefore should have been discussed by Friis since his title specifically referenced

⁴⁷ Herman R. Friis, "A Brief Review of the Development and Status of Geographical and Cartographical Activities of the United States Government: 1776-1818," *Imago Mundi* 19 (1965), 76.

government sponsored activities. Yet Friis certainly did not fulfill the promises his title set forth.

By 1966, Helen B. West wrote her “Lewis and Clark Expedition: Our National Epic” in the same nationalistic language that Van Every had used two years earlier. Importantly, West set the story up in a contemporary context, and stayed away from identifying the expedition as key to the creation of a national character and identity. West instead wrote about Lewis and Clark in a modern sense, and described how they were seen popularly at the time she was writing her article and how this popular conception slowly overshadowed the historical intents and purposes of the expedition itself. This attraction to popular, and not academic, writing may be because the magazine she was published in, *The Magazine of Western History*, featured popular topics that were easy enough for most Americans to understand. This popular magazine however does not preclude the published papers from being scholarly in nature. West said that most essentially, “one finds in the Expedition the westering impulse, indispensable to the epic of the nation.”⁴⁸ In this one sentence, she is able to clearly articulate how what was once an individual spirit had been expanded and embraced by the national populace as a whole, until Lewis and Clark were forever connected with what she so eloquently described as the ‘national epic.’ Yet West never explained why this epic applied only to Lewis and Clark and not to their contemporaneous explorers. Her limited analysis is seen in her inability to situate other expeditions in a similar context, or at least to propose why Lewis and Clark were so embraced while the other expeditions were gradually lost to the proverbial pages of history.

⁴⁸ Helen B. West, “Lewis and Clark Expedition: Our National Epic,” *The Magazine of Western History* 16 (1966), 5.

Around the same time, John McDermott attempted an intense reimagining of the frontier itself. In his 1967 book, McDermott tried to pull away from the Turnerian approach of the colonist being overmatched by the wilderness. Although McDermott did acknowledge that Pike faced insurmountable difficulties, he argued that this is not because of the factors of the frontier itself but instead a result of the poor preparation of the party.⁴⁹ On the contrary, McDermott successfully placed Lewis, Clark and Pike in context (Lewis and Clark were well supplied, while Pike was not) and used them as a counter-narrative to his discussion of the Spanish governmental system already in place in the South and Southwest. McDermott actually compared one aspect of the two respective expeditions instead of just concentrating on one or the other. Unfortunately though, he strictly compared them instead of looking into their immense similarities.

Nearly thirty years passed before more articles were written on the topic. Yet although time passed, the thematic analysis remained basically the same. James Ronda's 1994 article, for instance, discussed a distinct moment in place and time, the year 1806 in the American West. Ronda's account provided a perfect characterization of Lewis and Clark's role in the formation of a national identity. Ronda described it as a "Roman legion, an imperial guard sent to scout the fringes of an expanding American imperium."⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Ronda also addressed the successes (or in his view, the failings) of this expedition. Their mission was to find the most direct water route across the continent. Needless to say, Lewis and Clark failed miserably. Ronda further stated that "in the geography of American myth, Lewis and Clark loom as great western heroes.

⁴⁹ John Francis McDermott, *The Frontier Re-Examined* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 21.

⁵⁰ James P. Ronda, "A Moment in Time: The West: September 1806," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 44 (1994), 7.

The shadow of failure has been replaced by the radiance of bright reputation.”⁵¹ Regrettably, Ronda does not attempt to interpret why this shift, this national myth making epic, has occurred. Additionally while Ronda does mention Pike, he does so through the classic context of the Wilkinson-Burr scheme and does not compare the two expeditions directly. In turn, Pike has been characterized as undertaking his expeditions in hopes of national recognition. He had, in Ronda’s words, “dreams of honor, advancement and a rising American empire” dancing in his head.⁵² Yet while Pike did desire individual success and recognition, Ronda’s assertion that Pike sold out his country because of his dreams of ‘advancement’ is incorrect. Ronda’s beliefs are completely disproven through Pike’s own words when he told his son to always be prepared to die for your country.⁵³ Despite what Ronda tried to argue, Pike was clearly a patriot and not a traitor.

Historians have continued to engage with Lewis, Clark and Pike. By the dawning of the twenty-first century, as the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition drew near, Mark Spence published “The Unnatural History of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.” This article attacked the public representations and remembrances of Lewis and Clark, and was therefore not strictly grounded in historical scholarship. Spence believed that “one hundred years after their journey, Lewis and Clark had become prophets for a new century’s faith in material progress and overseas empire.”⁵⁴ Spence created a new spin on Lewis and Clark; his pessimistic revisionism relabeled the expedition from one of exploration to one of conquest, with pioneers playing their own

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 8.

⁵³ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 17.

⁵⁴ Mark Spence, “The Unnatural History of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 53 (2003), 57.

role as developers who moved in not far after the first wave of explorers. Fortunately, Spence is grounded by his own views and did not unleash his fury at historians for their misconception of the expedition. Furthermore, he is never able to fully articulate what caused his extreme views, nor how the field of history can rectify its drastically conflicted positions. It should be noted that despite Spence's extremely negative take on the expedition, he was slightly correct in his assertion that it consisted of conquest as well as exploration. Although if he wanted to seriously strengthen his point, Spence would probably have included a direct reference to Pike since Pike physically bought land from some of the natives he encountered and therefore would have acted as a perfect example to support Spence's argument.

At the same time, Peter Kastor looked into the early western expeditions through the lens of a long-term expansion into the "Far West"; not as the sole work of the Jefferson administration.⁵⁵ Kastor situated the literature and cartographic publications of the expeditions as indicative of "broader movements in national self-description that shaped U.S. aesthetics and identity."⁵⁶ This approach allowed for Kastor to analyze Lewis, Clark and Pike alongside Jefferson's goals for expansion. In other words, the United States was concerned with the long historical effects of gradually consolidating their power in the Far West, while at the same time emphasizing their daily attempts to strengthen the country's power in the newly acquired Mississippi River area. Despite the positive things Kastor accomplished, he still neglected to locate the expeditions as extensions of one another. He also only concentrated on the two most popular

⁵⁵ Peter Kastor, "What Are the Advantages of the Acquisition?": Inventing Expansion in the Early American Republic," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008), 1013.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1017.

expeditions, and like many historians before him, avoided inclusion of the lesser known ones.

Some recent scholars have also written biographies of these figures. Landon Jones book on William Clark connected Clark's prowess later in his life (in terms of his success with dealing with Western matters, and his ability to govern, etc.), to his "earlier experiences on the culturally porous borderlands and to the larger agendas of international empire building."⁵⁷ For Jones, Clark was inextricably suited to the job of the so-called guardian-of-the west; his brother was George Rogers Clark, who had been extremely successful in his campaigns versus the Native Americans during the Revolutionary War. It is almost as if the Clark family was involved in a lifelong struggle of war versus the Indian. Later in life, William Clark helped craft the U.S. policy towards Native Americans in the West while he was the Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1822 until his death in 1838. The Jones book is a balanced approach to the topic; however, he did fall into the trap of writing a popular biography. Or, at least, one that catered to popular readers and not academics historians. Therefore, his assertion that William Clark was one of the most important keys and/or individuals to the shaping of the West may have been stretched a bit to push the appeal of the book.

Two main biographies of Meriwether Lewis were also published during the last decade or so: Thomas Danisi and John Jackson's Meriwether Lewis in 2009, and Clay Jenkinson's The Character of Meriwether Lewis-Explorer in the Wilderness in 2011. While these books have similar subjects, they deal with completely different aspects of Lewis and his life. Danisi and Jackson concentrated on a new interpretation of his death—that Lewis had a severe enough mental illness to commit suicide. Nevertheless,

⁵⁷ Landon Y. Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 114.

the book also discussed his belief in helping Native Americans in the West. He believed that “by imposing the economic system, Indian policies, and land laws favored by the United States, he would enlighten the inhabitants and better their lives by bringing democracy and order to the frontier.”⁵⁸ According to the authors, Lewis believed in lifting up the Indians by bringing inherently American ideas to the frontier. However, this book is a popular historical biography and, as such (per the authors’ own admittance), presented Lewis with “few...warts or blemishes.”⁵⁹

Clay Jenkinson’s more recent book also features the problems of popular writing. The author is primarily a literary historian. He thought of Lewis as the key to the whole journey—“I (Jenkinson) believe that if you took Lewis out of the picture and launched the expedition into the wilderness under the sole command of William Clark, there would have been no bicentennial.”⁶⁰ This narrow view can be attributed to the author’s attraction, almost to the point of hero worship, to Meriwether Lewis. For Jenkinson, his Lewis was “a man of genius and a man of destiny, a gifted explorer and a marvelous writer.”⁶¹ Problematically, this book also presents Lewis without flaws, and even goes as far as to attack the failings of William Clark while praising his partner. Additionally, whenever a historian uses the term ‘destiny’ in their work, it raises some proverbial red flags. Therefore this view is rather deterministic in nature, and portrays Lewis life as a one-way street of sorts; that events happened because of Lewis, and nothing else could have necessarily changed what had occurred.

⁵⁸ Thomas C. Danisi and John C. Jackson, *Meriwether Lewis* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2009), 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ Clay S. Jenkinson, *The Character of Meriwether Lewis-Explorer in the Wilderness* (Washburn, North Dakota: The Dakota Institute Press of the Lewis and Clark Fort Mandan Foundation, 2011), xxix.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

There has even been one recent publication that on the surface appears to argue for the interconnectedness of the expeditions; in early 2012, Matthew L. Harris and Jay H. Buckley published an edited volume on Pike and his relationship to Jeffersonian expansionism. In fact the book does argue that Pike should be referenced and discussed much more in both the history of the American West, and frontier history in general. It does, however, only situate Pike and other contemporary explorers through the lens of Jeffersonian imperialism. The editors argue that Pike deserves to be seen as an extension of Jefferson's westward quest, and that the other explorers of the day should be viewed in this same mindset.

After looking at many of the same sources, the interpretation of the editors present in their book is questionable. For instance, Buckley alleges "had the Spanish not arrested Pike, he would be remembered in popular memory for his considerable exploratory efforts and not for getting lost or spying."⁶² While this assertion may be true, it is simply conjecture with no tangible support. Moreover, as has already been discussed, Pike's so-called 'considerable exploratory efforts' were, at least in terms of his second expedition, the result of a remarkable attempt on his part and an equally remarkable failure. Simply put, Pike's Expedition stumbled rather than navigated their way through the modern Southwest.

During the over one hundred years of scholarship on the two expeditions and the three main individuals involved, a few trends have emerged. Some historians still insisted on looking at these expeditions through the Turnerian view. Many others portray Lewis, Clark and Pike in a national story where they were able to spread

⁶² Jay H. Buckley, "Jeffersonian Explorers in the Trans-Mississippi West," in *Zebulon Pike, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, 124.

American influence and have been, in turn, recognized as a national ‘epic’ of sorts. At the same time, there is one key point that has been overlooked in the historiography; a historical work that would look into these early expeditions as not only contemporary, but also connected in both motive and means. Scholarship that would treat the expeditions as an outgrowth of not only each other, but also of the period in which they occurred is necessary.

Recent popular works and events have supported these incorrect views and assumptions. For example, the U.S. Government decided at the end of the last century to mint a coin that featured Sacajawea’s likeness on its head. In addition, books have continued to crop up that romanticize in the public consciousness not only Sacajawea, but the entirety of the Lewis and Clark Expedition itself. One of the most intriguing examples is a recent children’s picture book by Patricia Reeder Eubank, Seaman’s Journal: On the Trail with Lewis and Clark. This book reimagines the journey through the eyes of a Newfoundland dog, named Seaman, who purportedly traveled with Lewis as his companion during the duration of the expedition. Yet Eubank presents blatantly incorrect facts that continue to inform of the unfortunate misinterpretations of Lewis and Clark.

The book does include correct historical events, such as the interaction with the group of Kickapoo during the expedition’s earliest stage. However, Seaman went on to record the party’s first interaction with Sacajawea. In his mind, “A French Canadian fur trader named Toussaint Charbonneau came into camp, and Lewis hired him as interpreter and cook. His Shoshone wife, Sacajawea, is about fourteen.”⁶³ As has been

⁶³ Patricia Reeder Eubank, *Seaman’s Journal: On the Trail with Lewis and Clark*, (Nashville: Ideas Children’s Book, 2002), 12.

noted before, this was not how Sacajawea came to be hired nor does the book reflect the true nature of the expedition's view of her. Another example of Seaman's romantic depiction of Sacajawea was when a boat capsized. He noted that she "scooped out all that she could reach" from the water.⁶⁴

Primary sources date this incident to October 14, 1805 on the Columbia River. Needless to say, Eubank's assertion was horribly inaccurate. In reality, the party helped to save as many supplies as they could without Sacajawea's help. Lewis and Clark mentioned the capsizing in their own journals but followed this up by stating that "the canoe itself, and nearly all that had been washed overboard was recovered."⁶⁵ Whitehouse even recorded the exact articles that had been swept overboard in his journal entry for the date; he recalled that "a considerable quantity of baggage & bedding washed out."⁶⁶ It is clear that authors have begun to take liberty with not only the story of Lewis and Clark but also of the larger expedition as well. In turn, the recreation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition into an American mythic journey, befit with legendary characters, in the both the public and historic consciousness over the past few decades has ultimately resulted in a shift. This moved from a detailed discussion of the early frontier that featured all the expeditions involved in exploration, to a focus on the most popular expedition, that of Lewis and Clark. The ignorance of other parties, therefore, is decidedly problematic.

Yet one fascinating book on Pike does exist—Zebulon Pike: Explorer of the Southwest by William Sanford and Carl Green. The authors have tried to give an

⁶⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁵ Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis & Clark*, 183.

⁶⁶ Joseph Whitehouse, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition-The Journals of Joseph Whitehouse*, 353.

accurate retelling of Pike's life and experiences. Unfortunately, they fell into the same trap as many academic historians and romantically labeled Pike a spy. While the hardships of the journey are briefly discussed, Sanford and Green argue that Pike "had no intention of giving up" because "his spy mission drove him on."⁶⁷ Pike's famous papers, which historians in the early twentieth century were so intent on rediscovering, are alleged to have convinced the Spanish Colonial Governor during Pike's captivity that Pike was in fact a spy. In fact, the authors even argue that Pike, or Zeb as they informally called him, acted surprised upon his arrest by Spanish soldiers. On seeing them, he exclaimed, "What, is not this the Red River?"⁶⁸ While this was in fact Pike's reaction, his journal provided a larger context. Pike immediately realized the problems he had entered into—he "immediately ordered (his) flag to be taken down and rolled up and was conscious that they must have positive orders to take me in."⁶⁹ Instead of risking an international incident without definitive proof, the Spanish sent a protest to Washington, D.C. Retelling Pike's story is not the problem; instead, the issue is that Sanford and Green insisted on locating Pike's story alongside the larger arc of the Southwestern Conspiracy. This example serves as an apt metaphor for the larger issues that have continued to plague the modern historical and popular interpretations of the Pike Expedition.

It is evident that the concentration in Pike's scholarship about whether or not he was a spy has outshone his true achievements. Nevertheless, allegations of spying should not matter at all and even though his expedition was largely a failure, Pike

⁶⁷ William R. Sanford and Carl R. Green, *Zebulon Pike: Explorer of the Southwest*, (Springfield, New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1996), 30.

⁶⁸ William R. Sanford and Carl R. Green, *Zebulon Pike: Explorer of the Southwest*, 34; Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 175.

⁶⁹ Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Southwestern Journals of Zebulon Pike*, 175.

deserves to be discussed in the same sentence as Lewis and Clark instead of being loosely ignored. Sure, Pike did exhibit some errors in judgment that allowed him to be used by Governor Wilkinson, but these lapses are not sufficient enough to warrant the treatment Pike has received over the decades.

At the same time these characterizations of all parties involved do not lend much credibility to the modern-day depictions of their major characters in the public consciousness. In fact, even though there has been significant historical interest in the expeditions of the early nineteenth century, no consensus has been reached as to why there was such a divergent path in the inextricably linked story of Lewis, Clark and Pike. Some historians have attacked and even vilified Zebulon for one simple act, his purported connection to the aforementioned Southwest Conspiracy of Burr and Wilkinson. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that this charge was ever even remotely valid. Unfortunately, Pike, Lewis and Clark have all experienced revisions in the public eye.

What is needed is a reevaluation of these individuals and their actions. This would return the stories to their primary documents, so that the expeditions are seen and situated in their true lights—as events inherently connected with one another, actions that were led by everyday men who were in a quest to explore the west, instead of as romantically idealized depictions of an ever-expanding American frontier. As such, historians should at least acknowledge their bias towards Pike, and concentrate on what can be tangibly discussed and proven, instead of continuing a tradition of pure unadulterated speculation and guesswork. Furthermore it is clear that these two expeditions should forever be located together in the historical consciousness, instead of

being pulled apart again and again by comparative histories insistent upon continuing the unfortunate historic trope of separating Lewis and Clark from Pike.

Appendix

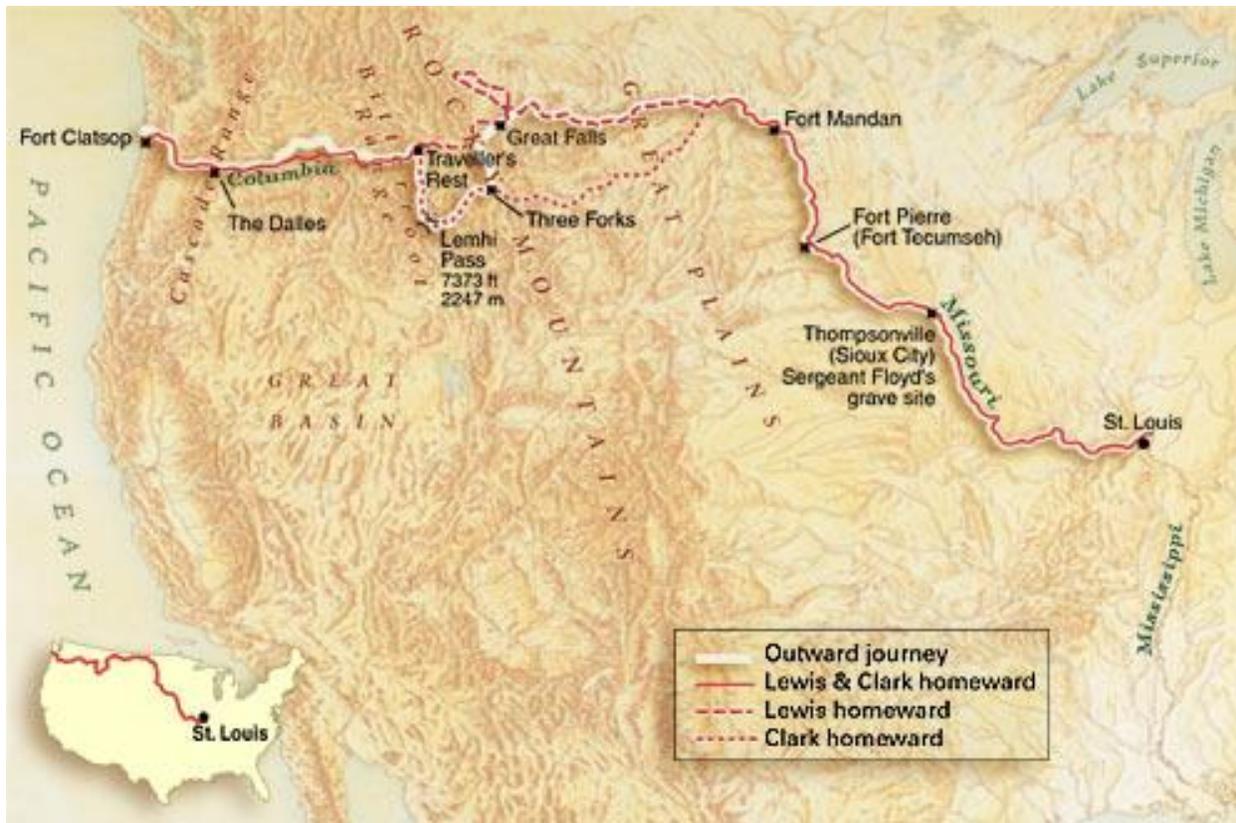


Illustration #1-Map showing the Lewis and Clark journey. Illustration courtesy of: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/images/movie/maps.jpg>.



Illustration #2—Map showing western expeditions, such as Fremont, Pike and Lewis and Clark. Illustration courtesy of:

http://www1.dcsdk12.org/secondary/hrhs/teachers/sedivy/mr_sedivy/colo/c_pikemaplg.jpg.

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