

Citizen Explorer: The Life of Zebulon Pike

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British Band returned to Illinois the next year, a decision Nichols sees as resulting from disaffection among Indian women with the unbroken soil of Iowa and the “frustrations and fears” that convinced the disaffected Natives “to ignore the reality of their circumstances” (97). Many of their Sauk and Meskwaki cousins refused to join the move; the federal government would not or could not police unruly pioneers; British assistance never materialized; and neighboring Winnebagos and Potawatomis had no intention of offering refuge, and even allied with the United States.

The results of this and other conflicts, Nichols demonstrates, are sobering. Both the British Band and their cousins who had remained in Iowa suffered the same fate, giving up another 6 million acres of land before eventually being forced to move again, first to Kansas and then to present-day Oklahoma (although some Meskwaki eventually settled on their settlement near Tama, Iowa). The neighboring tribes who had allied with the federal government likewise had to cede their traditional areas, albeit a bit more slowly. In the end, white insistence that the tribes give up their land, customs, and culture gave Indians few real options; “because these contests pitted groups with vastly differing demographic, economic, and military resources, it comes as no surprise that the invaders won” (194).

Citizen Explorer: The Life of Zebulon Pike, by Jared Orsi. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. xii, 392 pp. Illustrations, maps, chronology, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

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When Zebulon Montgomery Pike died in 1813, he was more highly regarded than Meriwether Lewis. Today, however, Pike is not deemed worthy of three years of bicentennial adulation as Lewis was. Unlike previous biographers who often portrayed Pike as the “lost pathfinder” — perhaps even a traitor — Jared Orsi establishes the explorer’s ardent nationalism and idealistic response to hardship through a core question: “How did Pike himself and the early republic more generally develop and sustain nationalism when their ideals bumped up against the physical challenges of the North American environment?” (6). Orsi answers, “Pike’s life . . . opens up a window for understanding nature and nationalism in the early republic — not because he was typical of the nation or causally essential to its development — but because he and the nation grew up together” (6).

Pike, commissioned as an officer in 1799, quickly attached himself to General James Wilkinson, commander of the U.S. Army and governor of Upper Louisiana Territory. In August 1805 Wilkinson ordered Pike to take 20 men and provisions and explore the Mississippi River for four months in search of its headwaters. His instructions were nearly identical to Thomas Jefferson's instructions to Lewis and Clark: keep a diary; note weather and natural resources; obtain information about the Indians; gather specimens of animals, plants, and minerals; and draw maps. Of particular interest to many readers of this journal, Pike dined with Julien Dubuque, the early French settler who had opened profitable lead mines and served as intermediary between various governments and Indian tribes in the region. Farther north, Pike considered building a fort across from the mouth of the Wisconsin River in present-day Iowa.

Pike made blunder after blunder, all of which delayed his expedition and resulted in his men suffering through cold and snowy winter months. In late January 1806 they arrived at a British fur post on Leech Lake, near the desired headwaters. There they remained until spring before returning to St. Louis. Orsi maintains that Pike's "greatest achievement was to begin mapping . . . the upper Mississippi country . . . discern the vast extent of [British fur operations and] . . . understand the connections among Indians, their rivalries, their economies, and their politics" (123).

With a few weeks rest, in mid-July 1806 Pike set out on his second and most extensive western exploration with a party of 23 men, including 17 who had been with him the previous year. Once again Pike was to identify resources, explore rivers, survey the region and map it, conduct Indian diplomacy, and determine the extent and navigability of the Arkansas and Red rivers while avoiding alarming Spanish authorities. Orsi is convinced that Pike was not trying to reach Santa Fe illegally as suggested by the "secret orders theory." "His behavior is best explained as part of a larger set of mistakes and poor decisions occasioned by failure of his resources" (201). Pike first spotted what he initially labeled the Grand Peak (now bearing his name) in mid-November 1806. The expedition spent two winter months lost in the Colorado Rockies before crossing into Spanish-claimed territory.

In late February 1807 Pike and his men were escorted into Santa Fe and eventually south to Chihuahua, where the Spanish governor promised to take them into the United States. In what the author accurately calls "a comfortable captivity" (205), Pike, while clearly believing in the superiority of American nationalism and maintaining his prejudices against political and Catholic corruption and superstition, enjoyed

Spanish hospitality. Throughout, Pike struggled to keep maps and journals, managing to smuggle out most of the documents, some of which were stuffed into gun barrels.

Upon his return, Pike was caught up in the treason trial of former Vice President Aaron Burr; however, the author found no evidence that Pike knew anything about or participated in any of Burr's activities. A congressional committee subsequently exonerated Pike. Congress considered bills to compensate Pike and his men with land and double army pay, but it never approved that legislation. In 1810 Pike published *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Parts of Louisiana*. Aimed primarily at Congress, the volume described both expeditions as Pike wanted the world to view them.

This is an extremely well-written biography, fully documented with abundant primary and appropriate secondary sources. Orsi goes beyond a traditional biography to drive home an unmistakable theme: Pike "found solace in a nationalist idea—the republic's promise to reward citizens' virtue" (5). An excellent map, absolutely essential to follow the narrative, precedes each chapter. The text is enhanced by contemporary illustrations and portraits as well as landscape photographs, most taken by the author. *Citizen Explorer* is a must read for anyone interested in the early nineteenth-century American West and in an individual who deserves notoriety for expanding what would later be termed Manifest Destiny.

The Lost History of the New Madrid Earthquakes, by Conevery Bolton Valencius. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. ix, 460 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliographical essays, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Robyn Lily Davis is assistant professor of history at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. Her Ph.D. dissertation (University of Oklahoma, 2009), was "Science in the American Style, 1700–1800."

In her engagingly written *Lost History of the New Madrid Earthquakes*, Conevery Bolton Valencius explores the most powerful seismic upheavals ever experienced in the contiguous United States. Making the broadest possible claims for the interpretive importance of the devastating yet nearly forgotten New Madrid earthquakes of 1811 and 1812, Valencius explains how that cataclysm—three massive earthquakes and many subsequent tremors centered in the bootheel of southeastern Missouri but felt from Iowa Territory to Natchez, Mississippi, and from the upper Missouri River to the Atlantic seaboard—was lost to popular memory, downplayed by politicians and land promoters, and ultimately denied by scientists.