



PIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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PIKE VISITS HISTORY IN THE SAN LUIS VALLEY, COLORADO/NEW MEXICO PART 2 OF 2 by Harv Hisgen

The San Luis Valley (SLV) has been peopled mainly by the Anasazi, Ute, Spanish colonialists, Hispanics, French, Americans, and others. In Part 1 I considered the Anasazi and Ute. I continue. It is desirable to preserve the rich history of differing peoples, their cultures, language and traditions.

Spanish/ French Explorers (1540-1780)

Both the Spanish and French entered the New World and began to spread their influence. Both explored Western Louisiana, the Spanish in what was to become New Spain all the way to California and the French generally to the north of the Spanish. Both searched for gold and competed with each other.

Notable Spanish explorers include: Francisco Vasquez de Coronado (1540), Juan de Oñate (1598-1604) and Juan Bautista de Anza Bezerra Nieto (1779).

The Spanish government in New Spain was being addled with the influence French traders exerted on Indians in New France and the supposed encroachments until on November 23, 1762, France ceded Louisiana to Spain. In the transition the Spanish were diplomatic in occupying Louisiana using French citizens and officials. ¹

French miners, traders and trappers however remained and had their influence in the Valley as others settled in the SLV.

Spanish Explorers and Colonialists (1779-present)

In 1692, Diego de Vargas led the Spanish recolonization of New Mexico after a Pueblo uprising drove colonialist to exile in El Paso del Norte in 1680. ²

The Spanish, notably de Ansa around 1779, brought colonialists (mostly Castilian speaking people) to the north along the Rio Grande River into New Mexico who later moved into the southern and eastern parts of the Valley. ³

The Spanish considered it their responsibility to protect and embellish the lives of their colonialists/settlers against the Apaches, Navajos (and Pueblo.) ⁴

They even sought to suppress the Pawnee who had attacked a Spanish scouting party and gain reassurances of peaceful relationships with them. ⁵

The first permanent Valley settlements (like San Luis) were built by settlers from Sante Fe, Taos and Abiquiu through 1833 Mexican land grants. ⁶

French Mining San Luis Valley Treasure Lebreau-LaBlanc Expeditions

There's gold in those hills. Many stories of gold mining and buried treasure are found in many parts of the West. Both the Spanish and French sought to find gold in the American West. In the San Luis Valley, the French around 1795 reportedly found gold (\$33 million [today's \$]) southwest of Del Norte in the Summitville area located 26 miles up Pinos Creek Rd. as a result of the Lebreau Expedition.

Some called it Treasure Mountain ^{7,8} ; others called it Citadel Mountain ⁹.

The French Lebreau Expedition mined and smelted the gold between 1795 and 1807. Some say the French removed a great deal of gold to Abiquiu (now NM) and Santa Fe. However reportedly they had to bury the remaining gold in three places. One reason given for leaving gold is that they were dying because of mercury (used in the smelting process) poisoning- unknown then.

Another reason which is given is that the indians after some time began to attack the French. The first expedition- Lebreau with 300 men- buried the remaining gold at the time and all but one (LaBlanc) were massacred.

LaBlanc with the map he carried out and 50 men returned in a second expedition around 1844-47 but were supposedly killed.



In 1993, the LaBlanc family stumbled upon a 20 foot tunnel south of Del Norte and has since obtained the Colorado state treasure rights to legally enter the cave and claim whatever treasure may remain there. ¹⁰

There comes a time in every rightly constructed boy's life when he has a raging desire to go somewhere and dig for hidden treasure. --Mark Twain

French Trappers and traders The French were by and large successful as were the Spanish with their relations with the Ute Indians. Unofficial French trappers and traders continued in the Valley as Americans began to settle in the Valley.

During 1795, the French (Captain) Louis Villemont expedition visited Santa Fe. The Santa Fe Governor Carondelet granted two French brothers- Auguste and Pierre Chouteau permission to trade with New Mexico and gave them a trade route to Santa Fe. "By building trade and trust with many Indian tribes, the brothers slowly opened" a trade route between St. Louis and the San Luis Valley and Santa Fe. ¹¹

However, in 1799, new Spanish Governor General Manuel María de Salcedo began favoring a Spanish businessman instead of the Chouteau fur operation. ¹²

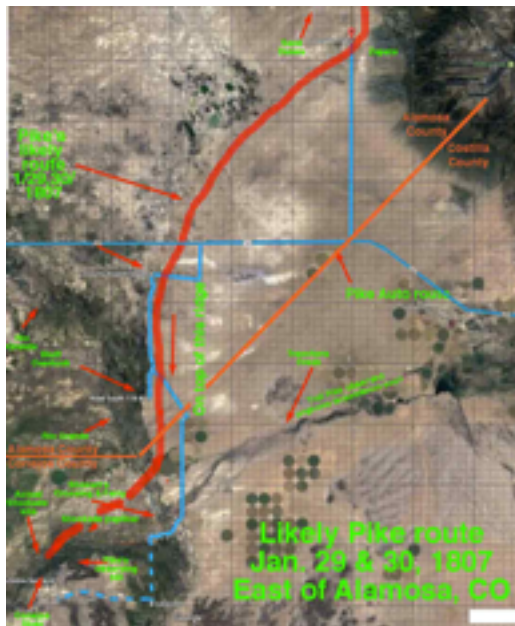
Americans (1807-present)

Zebulon Montgomery Pike

The Spanish handed back Louisiana to France- 1801 to November 30, 1803. ¹³

The **Louisiana Purchase** in 1803 added 828,000 square miles to the United States. The U.S. paid \$15,000,000 USD (or around a quarter of a billion in 2016 dollars). The Louisiana territory (west of the Mississippi in its watershed) including the northeastern section of **New Mexico**; and the area of **Colorado** east of the **Continental Divide**. ^{14,15}

President Jefferson requested Congressional money to explore our new land. Among those sent was Zebulon Pike, first to the headwaters of the Mississippi and then southwest. Pike entered the San Luis Valley on Tuesday, January 27th, 1807, at what is generally agreed 'Pikes gap' at the top of Medano Pass (Great Sand Dunes National Park, Huerfano County, CO 37.856232, -105.432698 9600'.)



Pike's likely route (by lay of the land)- The party moved on the east side of the Sand Dunes to Zapata Falls Creek (below Mount Blanca) and then to a site 5 miles up the Conejos River passing what is called today Washington Stage Stop, and on the bluff above Saguache Creek (near CR 116S.) They crossed the Rio Grande River likely at what became known as Stewart's crossing (just north of Trinchera Creek) on the north side of the Conejos to McIntire Spring (just north of the McIntire mansion ruins.) We believe the location of the Pike Stockade is a little over a mile up the Conejos River **from** the replica of the SLV Stockade near Sanford, CO. Governor McIntire in the 1880-90s reported finding Pike's four-foot ditch. ¹⁶

Saguache Creek Bluff Roadside panel- "About 5 miles south of this overlook, they built a stockade on the Conejos River to wait out remaining winter. But they were now in Spanish territory, and on February 26, 100 Spanish troops captured Pike and his team and escorted them deeper into Spanish territory for questioning." ¹⁷

The Journey deeper into Spanish territory-

Six were brought "deeper into Spanish territory." Pike had a total of 16 men in Colorado. Dr. Robinson was already in Santa Fe. Two men had been left in on the Arkansas in Cañon City, 2 at Horn Creek and 1 at Muddy Creek in the Wet Mountain Valley because of frostbitten feet. On February 28, two men were rescuing these 5 men and the Spanish allowed two to stay at the SLV stockade to receive the rescued. These nine were brought south later.

A friendship begins- Facundo Melgares and Zebulon Pike

Facundo Melgares (to become the last Spanish Governor) was assigned to escort Pike from Albuquerque to Chihuahua. Both Melgares and Pike spoke French and were of the same rank.

Facundo immediately put Pike at ease. The two became good friends exchanging personal and military talk.

Reportedly Pike was allowed to clandestinely continue to record what he found.

See a separate article on this friendship.

Hispanics (1821-present)

As time continued many of the Native Americans, Spanish and natives from Old Mexico intermarried. After land grants were given by the Mexican government in the 1830's, many of the hispanic culture and other Spanish-speaking cultures who do not consider themselves to be hispanic, began populating the San Luis Valley.

Mexican Independence-

Mexico declared it's independence from Spain in 1810 and gained it in late 1821. This, of course, included the San Luis Valley.

From 1818 to 1822, Facundo Melgares was the Last Spanish Governor of the Northern Provinces of New Spain including the San Luis Valley. ¹⁸

A couple of other notes involving the San Luis Valley-

1846 US invasion of New Mexico

The United States invaded and occupied New Mexico in 1846. Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny's second-in-command Alexander Doniphan decisively won the Battle of Brazito in Sacramento north of Chihuahua on Christmas Day. ¹⁹

1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War. Mexico lost almost half of its territory, including parts of present-day Arizona, Colorado, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Texas, and Utah. ²⁰

References: (All web references retrieved July 2017)

1. Adams, Maynard Cornett; Citadel Mountain- Sabre Printers; 1st edition 1993; p. 47.
2. New Mexico State History website; <http://newmexicohistory.org/historical-events-and-timeline/spanish-colonial>
3. Valdez, Olivama Salazar de & Dolores Valdez de Pong, Life in Los Sauces, 2005 Adobe Village press, Monta Vista, Colorado. They note movement to Las Sauces in many settings.
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facundo_Melgares
5. Gomez, Arthur; New Mexico State History website; <http://newmexicohistory.org/people/facundo-melgares>
6. Simmons, Virginia McConnell; The San Luis Valley- Land of the Six-armed Cross- 2nd edition; University Press of Colorado; 1999; p 77
7. <http://www.treasurenet.com/forums/treasure-legends-colorado/101041-san-luis-valley-treasure-lebreau-lablanc-expeditions.html>
8. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/co-treasures8.html>
9. *ibid.* Adams.
10. *ibid.* Adams; Introduction
11. *ibid.* Adams; p. 48.
12. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Chouteau
13. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Mar%C3%ADa_de_Salcedo
14. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana_Purchase
15. It can be noted that the Continental Divide passes through Breckenridge, Aspen, Telluride, Durango/ Pagosa Springs all west of the San Luis Valley and the Sangre de Cristo. It should be noted that location of the purchase in western Colorado was in question, but generally considered the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in southern Colorado.
16. *Ibid.* Valdez.
17. Roadside panel- On the Bluff above Sawatch Creek, near CR 116 S. southeast of Alamosa and between Mount Blanca/ Zapata Falls and the mouth of the Conejos River.
18. *Ibid.* Gomez.
19. <http://newmexicohistory.org/historical-events-and-timeline/mexican>
20. <http://newmexicohistory.org/historical-events-and-timeline/us-territorial>

Interesting reading:

a De Vaca, Cabeza; Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America.

b Nisbet, Jack, Sources of the River- Tracking David Thompson across Western North America.

c L'Amour, Luis; Education of a Wandering Man.

ZEBULON PIKE AN AMERICAN HERO NEW CHILDREN'S COLORING BOOK

Ed French, former Disney artist, has completed his Pike Children's Coloring Book.

The print price for this 48 page coloring book is \$9.57, \$10 for face to face sales in Fremont County. It is now available on www.amazon.com under Zebulon Pike an American Hero under books.

It is also up on Kindle.

Also finished for sale- *Painting #1 Pike's Christmas 1806*, *Painting #2 Bighorn "New Animal"*, *Painting #3A Small Blue Cloud*, *Painting #4 Glory-Battle-at-York*, *Painting #5 Up Out of the Gorge*, *Painting #6 Climbing Up Pike's Gorge* (Royal Gorge). See pricing and ordering below.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW LIEUTENANTS by Allan Vainley

Spanish First Lieutenant Facundo Melgares¹ and American First Lieutenant Zebulon Pike met in St. Fernandez near Albuquerque on March 8, 1807. Pike unknowingly had been promoted to Captain the previous September. As far as he was concerned he and Facundo were fellow lieutenants. Both spoke French. In fact in early February Pike boned up on his French grammar.



As we imagine two friends

Both were loyal to their country. Both took a hard line with leadership. See Hardline below.

Before their meeting

Prior to March 7, 1807 Dr. Robinson (absent from Pike's party since February 7th) had met Lieutenant Don Facundo Melgares and on March 7 told Pike, "... you will find a gentleman, a soldier and one of the most gallant men you ever knew."²

Governor Joaquin del Real Alencaster in Santa Fe had assigned Melgares (to replace Captain Anthony D'Almansa) to escort the American party to Chihuahua.

"Assuring the foreigners that they were technically not under arrest,"³ the [Santa Fe] governor [Alencaster] ordered that they be escorted to Chihuahua.

"Pike: You already disarmed my men without my knowledge, are there arms to be returned or not?"

Governor: They can receive them any moment."⁴

Facundo and Zeb became nearly instant friends when they met on March 8. They were together for 59 days until May 6 when they parted south of Chihuahua just above Durango Province.

The two soldiers spent a number of days discussing military as well as personal matters.

Let Pike's words give the feeling he had for his friend...

"When we approached the village of St. Fernandez, we were met by lieutenant Malgares, accompanied by two or three other officers ; he received me with the most manly frankness and the politeness of a man of the world. Yet my feelings were such as almost overpowered me and obliged me to ride by myself for a short period in order to recover myself: ..."

"Malgares finding I did not feel myself at ease took every means in his power to banish my reserve, which made it impossible on my part not to endeavor to appear cheerful; we conversed as well as we could and in two hours were as well acquainted as some people would be in the same number of months. Malgares possessing none of the haughty Castillian pride, but much of the urbanity of a Frenchman; and I will add my feeble testimony to his loyalty, by declaring that he was one of the few officers or citizens whom I found, who was loyal to their king, felt indignant at the degraded state of the Spanish monarchy ; ..."

That evening Melgares called for a fandango. "Send this evening six or eight of your handsomest young girls, to the village of St. Fernandez, where I propose giving a fandango, for the entertainment of the American officers arrived this day."

(Signed)

Don Faciendo."⁵



Their daily association inspired the American to write a similar assessment of Melgares to Governor Joaquin del Real Alencaster and others.

On parting on May 6, Pike wrote-

"Our friend Melgares accompanied us a few miles, to whom we bid[de] an eternal adieu, if war does not bring us together in the field of battle opposed as the most deadly enemies, when our hearts acknowledge the greatest friendship....."⁶

As quickly as their friendship began, it ceased in Villa López near Ciudad Jimenez south of Chihuahua. There the two soldiers separated, never to encounter one another again.⁷

Another note- Pike and Melgares had almost met on September 25, 1806 when Pike and his 20 men arrived at the Pawnee village in very southern central Nebraska. Melgares and his 200 militia were there weeks before and Pike remained until Oct 6, 1806.

Hardline-

On January 24, 1807, at Muddy Creek in the Wet Mountain Valley [Colorado], Pike called out one of his men for "seditious and mutinous" language.

"But your duty as a soldier called on your obedience to your officer, and a prohibition of such language, which for this time, I will pardon; but assure you, should it ever be repeated, by instant death, I will avenge your ingratitude and punish your disobedience. I take this opportunity likewise to assure you, soldiers generally of my thanks for the obedience, perseverance, and ready contempt of every danger, which you have generally evinced; I assure you nothing shall be wanting on my part, to procure you the rewards of our government and the gratitude of your countrymen."⁸

Pike was determined to compliment his men and this shows the degree to which he was committed to carry out their mission and keep order.

"On one occasion, Melgares related a story to Pike about his recent journey into Pawnee territory. Petitioned by two hundred of his militia to turn back home, he halted his march and constructed a gallows. At that point, he separated the petitioners from the rest of the unit, singled out the man who had presented the demands, and had him flogged as an example to anyone else who contemplated mutiny. This incident underscored Melgares' determination to avoid the embarrassment that had befallen Pedro Vial. Moreover, it indicated the degree to which he was prepared to carry out his duty successfully."^{9, 10}

Resources:

1. Pike in the original 1810 version noted below did spell Facundo Melgares' name Faciendo Melgares. The journal was transcribed using OCR technology retaining the original spelling.
2. Pike, Major Z. M.: An account of the Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi, and through the Western Parts of Louisiana, to the Sources of the Arkansas, Kans, La Platte, and Pierre Juan Rivers and a Tour through the Interior Parts of New Spain: C. & A. CONRAD, & Co.: PHILADELPHIA, 1810, p. 227.
3. Gomez, Arthur: New Mexico State History website; <http://newmexicohistory.org/people/facundo-melgares> (retrieved July 2017).
4. Ibid., Pike: March 4, 1807 p. 215.
5. Ibid., Pike: pp. 228, 229.
6. Ibid., Pike: p. 250.
7. Ibid., Gomez.
8. Ibid., Pike, p. 190.
9. Ibid., Gomez.
10. Donald Jackson, ed., The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike. With Letters and Related Documents, 2 vols. (Norman, Oklahoma, 1966) 1:406.07.

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Non profit organization	\$50	Vasquez-Smith	Life	\$1000	Zebulon Pike

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