



## Pike-Pawnee Site

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Zebulon Montgomery Pike, Kelly Model

## PIKE - PAWNEE SITE

*By D. R. BURLEIGH*

On the morning of September 29, 1806, the Spanish flag still waved over Nebraska. From a pole in front of the chief's lodge there in the Pawnee village on the Republican River it fluttered defiantly at Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike and his hardy little band of twenty-two soldier-explorers. Pike held council with the chiefs of the Republican Pawnee under that flag, told them their land now belonged to the United States, and prevailed upon the Indians to take down the Spanish flag and raise the Stars and Stripes in its place.

This incident marks a high point in the dramatic story of Lieutenant Pike's investigation of the southern plains and the southwest. Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed upon the achievement of Lewis and Clark and too little upon this important expedition of the discoverer of Pike's Peak. Pike blazed the path into the great American Southwest, laid the basis for the Santa Fe Trail and the flow of trade with the northern Mexican provinces. The capture and imprisonment of the Pike party by the Spanish officials was our first conflict with our neighbor to the south, eventually leading to the Mexican War and extension of the United States to the Pacific Coast.

Three years after the visit of Pike, in 1809, the Republican Pawnee abandoned their village on the Republican, moving into the Platte valley. With the passage of years the location of the village was lost.

In 1923 A. T. Hill discovered the site of this village between Red Cloud and Guide Rock and presented convincing archeological and historical proof that his discovery was the correct location. Verification of the accuracy of the Nebraska site by Smithsonian archeologists makes the Kansas monument, commemorating Pike's council with the Pawnee erected some thirty miles southeast, near Republic, Kansas, an historical error.<sup>1</sup>

The thorough investigation of the Pike-Pawnee site by Mr. Hill was a long step towards accurate and extensive information on the life of the distinctive Nebraska Indians, the Pawnee; it brought Nebraska Archeology into national prominence; it served as a connecting link between the historic Pawnee period and the period before the arrival of American explorers, making it possible to fill

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<sup>1</sup>Recent Smithsonian publications on Plains Archeology accept the Nebraska site. For definite proof of the Nebraska contention, see the evidence presented in Volume X No. 3 of this **Magazine**

in much of the story of the people who lived here during the 300 years following Coronado's Expedition in 1541 (protohistoric period) and opens the way to an extension of our knowledge further and further back—to the life of the peoples of the plains a thousand or more years ago. All of this was due to the careful and painstaking collection and classification of material, especially pottery, at the Pike-Pawnee site which, by defining the special characteristics of the articles used by the historic Pawnee, acted as a guide for all subsequent investigations of Pawnee sites, both historic and protohistoric—leading to the recognition of the ancestors of the Pawnee in the dim period of the prehistoric.

From this beginning, Mr. Hill and his associates in the work of the Nebraska Archeological Survey have extended their work, securing a tremendous amount of carefully cataloged artifacts of Indian life in the Nebraska region, evidences that are now giving us an understanding of the occupations, industry and agriculture, the habits, the mode of life and social customs of our predecessors on these Nebraska plains.

These discoveries, with the written analysis of their meaning, have made Nebraska the leader in Plains Archeology and have brought Plains Archeology to the forefront as one of the most important aspects of American Archeology, adding a new chapter to the story of human life on the North American continent.

The Pawnee-Pike site, a beautiful hillside on the edge of the valley of the Republican River, seven miles east and two miles south of Red Cloud, deserves permanent recognition. It should become known to all Nebraskans—and to all Americans—for its twofold significance—as a site commemorating the great achievements of Zebulon Montgomery Pike and as the cradle of Plains Archeology.

The model of Lieutenant Pike, a photograph of which accompanies this article, is available<sup>2</sup> for a statue that would make a worthy marker for this spot. This small model, which has never been cast for a monument, is a studio piece, the work of the famous American sculptor, James Edward Kelly.<sup>3</sup> This marching figure should be erected in Nebraska—overlooking the Republican Valley.

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<sup>2</sup>Among the effects of Sculptor Kelly, in the custody of Robert Bruce, New York City.

<sup>3</sup>Kelly, who died in 1933, created dozens of historical monuments. His Monmouth Battle Monument with its figure of Molly Pitcher, several Gettysburg memorials, and statues of the Civil War generals, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan and Hancock are some of his better known works.