



Colorado Biographies



Zebulon Montgomery Pike 1779 - 1813

- Zebulon Pike was born on a New Jersey farm in 1779.
- In 1794, at 15, Zebulon Pike joined the army.
- He married Clarissa Brown in 1801. They had five children; but, only one daughter reached adulthood. She married a son of President William Henry Harrison.
- In 1805, Lieutenant Pike was ordered to lead an expedition. One goal was to find the beginning of the Mississippi River. Pike took a wrong turn and mistakenly thought Leech Lake was the source, it was not.
- In 1806, Pike was sent on another expedition, this time to find the head waters of the Arkansas and Red Rivers.
- On Nov.15, 1806, Pike saw a mountain in the distance “*a small blue cloud*” and thought he could hike there in a day but it was 4 days away and the snow was too deep. Getting as far as Cheyenne Mt., Pike turned back, calling the distant mountain, “*Grand Peak*”.
- In 1807, Pike was taken into custody by the Spanish on suspicion of being a spy. After a time, he was released and returned to the U.S.
- During the War of 1812, Pike planned an attack on Canada.
- In 1813, Brigadier General Pike died in Canada during the Battle of York (Toronto.) Following the War of 1812, Zebulon Montgomery Pike was remembered as a hero.

Great Resources on Zebulon Montgomery Pike

- Ayer, Eleanor. *Colorado Chronicles: Famous Colorado Men*. Frederick, CO: Jende-Hagan Book- corp, c1980. pp. 2-5.
- Sanford, William R. *Zebulon Pike: Explorer of the Southwest*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, c1996. (easier biography)
- Witteman, Barbara. *Zebulon Pike: Soldier and Explorer*. Mankato, MN: Bridgestone Books, c2003.

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