

FIRST EXPEDITION—1842.

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1843.

To Colonel J. J. ABERT,

Chief of the Corps of Topographical Engineers :

SIR : Agreeably to your orders to explore and report upon the country between the frontiers of Missouri and the South Pass in the Rocky mountains, and on the line of the Kansas and Great Platte rivers, I sat out from Washington city on the 2d day of May, 1842, and arrived at St. Louis, by way of New York, the 22d of May, where the necessary preparations were completed, and the expedition commenced. I proceeded in a steamboat to Chouteau's landing, about four hundred miles by water from St. Louis, and near the mouth of the Kansas river, whence we proceeded twelve miles to Mr. Cyprian Chouteau's trading house, where we completed our final arrangements for the expedition.

Bad weather, which interfered with astronomical observations, delayed us several days in the early part of June at this post, which is on the right bank of the Kansas river, about ten miles above the mouth, and six beyond the western boundary of Missouri. The sky cleared off at length, and we were enabled to determine our position, in longitude $94^{\circ} 25' 46''$, and latitude $39^{\circ} 5' 57''$. The elevation above the sea is about 700 feet. Our camp, in the mean time, presented an animated and bustling scene. All were busily occupied in completing the necessary arrangements for our campaign in the wilderness, and profiting by this short delay on the verge of civilization, to provide ourselves with all the little essentials to comfort in the nomadic life we were to lead for the ensuing summer months. Gradually, however, every thing—the *materiel* of the camp, men, horses, and even mules—settled into its place, and by the 10th we were ready to depart ; but, before we mount our horses, I will give a short description of the party with which I performed this service.

I had collected in the neighborhood of St. Louis twenty-one men, principally Creole and Canadian *voyageurs*, who had become familiar with prairie life in the service of the fur companies in the Indian country. Mr. Charles Preuss, a native of Germany, was my assistant in the topographical part of the survey. L. Maxwell, of Kaskaskia, had been engaged as hunter, and Christopher Carson (more familiarly known, for his exploits in the mountains, as Kit Carson) was our guide. The persons engaged in St. Louis were :

Clément Lambert, J. B. L'Esperance, J. B. Lefèvre, Benjamin Potra, Louis Gouin, J. B. Dumés, Basil Lajeunesse, François Tessier, Benjamin Cadotte, Joseph Clément, Daniel Simonds, Leonard Benoit, Michel Morly, Baptiste Bernier, Honoré Ayot, François Latulippe, François Badeau, Louis Ménard, Joseph Ruelle, Moise Chardonnais, Auguste Janisse, Raphaël Prone