

## A REPORT

ON

### AN EXPLORATION OF THE COUNTRY

LYING BETWEEN THE

## MISSOURI RIVER AND THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS,

ON THE LINE OF

### THE KANSAS AND GREAT PLATTE RIVERS.

WASHINGTON, March 1, 1843.

To Colonel J. J. ABERT,

*Chief of the Corps of Top. Eng.:*

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 set 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 meantime, 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 civilisation, 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, everything—the *matériel* of the camp, men, horses, and even mules—settled into its place, and by the 10th we were ready to de-

part; 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 Chardonnois, Auguste Janisse, Raphael Proue.

In addition to these, Henry Brant, son of Col. J. B. Brant, of St. Louis, a young man of nineteen years of age, and Randolph, a lively boy of twelve, son of the Hon. Thomas H. Benton, accompanied me, for the development of mind and body which such an expedition would give. We were all well armed and mounted, with the exception of eight men, who conducted as many carts, in which were packed our stores, with the baggage and instruments, and which were each drawn by two mules. A few loose horses, and four oxen, which had been added to our stock of provisions, completed the train. We set out on the morning of the 10th, which happened to be Friday—a circumstance which our men did not fail to remember and recall during