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Review of From Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains; Major Stephen Long's Expedition, 1819-1820

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From Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains: Major Stephen Long's Expedition, 1819-1820. Edited by Maxine Benson. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum, Inc., 1988. Map, illustrations, photographs, color insert, bibliography, index. xxvii + 410 pp. \$20.00.

The task of editing historical documents is a difficult one; the editor must tread a fine line between preserving the historical integrity of the original text while offering the fresh and insightful information on that text that makes the new edition valuable. The responsibility of the historical editor becomes even more challenging when much of the editorial work involves the condensation of a lengthy original into a shorter new edition. In this new edition of the chronicles of Stephen Long's expedition across the Central Plains to the Rockies, the editor has successfully negotiated the shoals and reefs of condensation, abridging the original two-volume work into a single volume. This has been done by eliminating several chapters from the original (those having to do with observations of Indian life and customs) and condensing portions of the text of retained chapters. Some of the omitted material is provided in synopsis form in an "Interlude" that separates the events of 1819 from those of 1820; other excised material is summarized in the "Epilogue" with which the new edition concludes. Finally, the editor has eliminated the numerous and sometimes lengthy notes and annotations of the original. The result is a relatively small volume that focuses on Long's travels themselves and provides the general reader with a useful introduction to the expedition. The inclusion of many of the ink and pencil sketches, engravings, and watercolors by Titian Peale and

Samuel Seymour that graced the original Philadelphia edition of *From Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* has added to the flavor of the new edition and increases its value, particularly for the student reader. Finally, editor Benson has furnished her new edition with a short, well-written introduction that places Long's expedition within the particular context of its time and place and offers commentary upon the contributions of the expedition to science and to American images of the West. In this introduction Benson introduces fresh and insightful information that is critical to the historical editing process and cites much of the recent literature on the Long Expedition. And yet, in spite of the excellent editorial work and the handsome presentation of the material itself, this is not a work which will have much appeal to the serious scholar of early Western exploration. The elimination of most of the ethnographic material and the exclusion of the notes of the original severely limit the usefulness of the new edition for scholarly purposes. For those readers whose concerns are different from those of the scholar, however, this new publication is a fine addition to the literature of western exploration.

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