

How did the Flint Hills get their Name?

Resources:

<http://keep.konza.k-state.edu/prairieecology/TallgrassPrairieEcology%20copy.pdf>

<http://santafetrailresearch.com/pike/expedition.html>

(Exerpt from Zebulon Pike: Thomas Jefferson's Agent for Empire)

The next morning, after spending only one night in the Grand Osage village with Chouteau, Pike and Vasquez saddled their horses and rode hard to rejoin the expedition. At around 2:00 p.m. they reached their companions who were traveling along the south side of the Little Osage River, just west of the present day Missouri-Kansas state line. Pike ordered a halt to the day's march, sent out both Osage and American hunters, and that evening, all dined on wild turkeys. Two days later, on the morning of September 5, seven of the Little Osage warriors decided to leave Pike and return to their village. To Pike's surprise, Sans Oreille, Pawhuska's son and friend of the Americans, set off with the others.

The remaining caravan left the little Osage River the next morning and headed southwest across a prairie ridge toward the Neosho River, which Pike called the Grand. From atop the ridge, Pike described his view: "the prospect from the dividing ridge to the east and south-east is sublime. The prairie rising and falling in regular swells, as far as the sight can extend, produces a beautiful appearance." A few days later, as the expedition began winding its way through the spectacular Flint Hills of east-central Kansas, Pike complained in his journal: "Passed very rough flint hills. My feet blistered and very sore. But he also recorded the abundant wildlife of the area: "I stood on a hill, and in one view below me saw buffalo, elk, deer, cabrie [pronghorn antelope], and panthers," These were the first bison encountered by the expedition and several individuals, including Pike, brought down six; the men feasted that night.

**Zebulon Pike, heart all a-quiver,
Lookin' for the start of the Arkansas River.
He tromped all over Nature's thrills
And he said, "There's flint rock in these
hills!"**

**He wrote back about his quest.
White man started movin' west.
They gave them 40 acres to plow,
But the farmer said, "I don't know how!"**

The settlers who moved to the Flint Hills found to their dismay that the flint and limestone rock made it very difficult to plow the land in order to plant their crops. Their equipment would break while trying to plow through the rocky terrain. Many farmers ended up moving out due to this problem. But the rocks didn't bother the cowboys, who welcomed the rich grass in the Flint Hills.