

# NEBRASKA TRAILBLAZER

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No. 2

Explorers

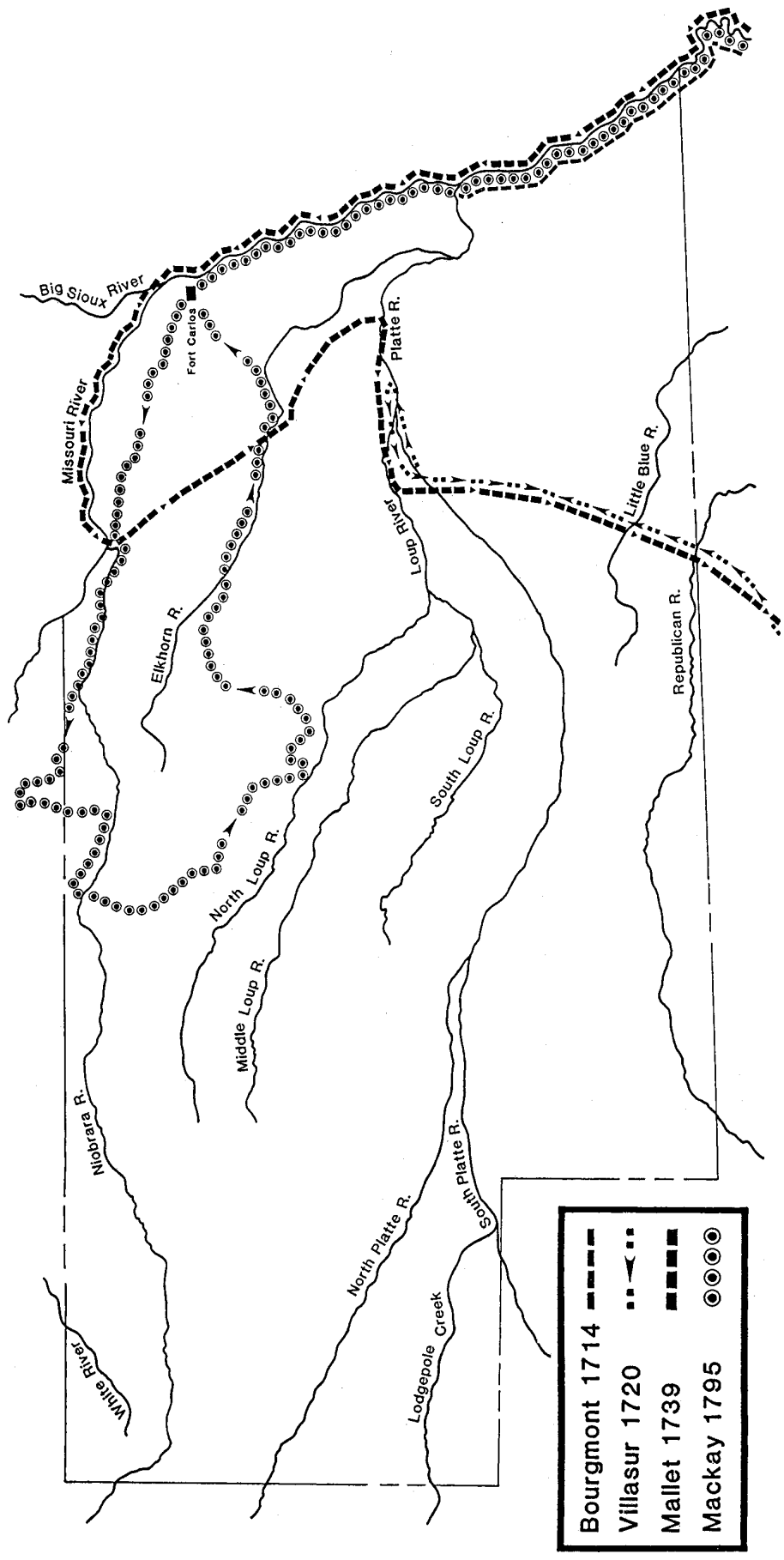
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## MERIWETHER LEWIS AND WILLIAM CLARK

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark are probably the most famous explorers to see Nebraska. President Jefferson sent them to explore the area known as the Louisiana Purchase, which the United States had recently bought from France. They went up the Missouri River in 1804, finally reaching the Pacific Ocean and returning to St. Louis in 1806. Lewis and Clark were captains in the U.S. Army and started with 45 men in their command. They held councils with the Indian tribes they met on their journey.

# EARLY EXPLORERS IN NEBRASKA



France and Spain both claimed Nebraska long before it became part of the United States. These two countries sent explorers into the area more than 270 years ago to claim land for their own country. At first they hoped to find a short and easy route to the Pacific Ocean or to discover rich deposits of gold. Although they were unsuccessful they found there were other kinds of riches. There were countless buffalo and other animals whose hides and furs were valuable. Soon explorations were combined with fur trading expeditions to distant tribes.

**Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont** was a Frenchman who explored the Missouri River and went at least as far as the Platte River. His reports contain the first recorded use of the word Nebraska.

**Colonel Pedro de Villasur** made an exploration from New Mexico to Nebraska in 1720, along with 45 soldiers. Near the mouth of the Loup River, Pawnee and Oto Indians attacked the Spanish. Villasur and most of the soldiers were killed.

**Pierre and Paul Mallet** went up the Missouri River in 1739. They thought it would take them to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where they wanted to trade with the Spanish. They met the Pawnee Indians who knew the way to Santa Fe. The Mallet brothers finally reached their destination.

**James Mackay** was a Spanish citizen born in Scotland who commanded a 33-man expedition up the Missouri River in 1795. He built a fur trading post in present-day Dakota County. This fort was the first one in Nebraska.

## EXPLORERS AFTER THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

In 1803 the United States of America purchased the Louisiana Territory, which included what is now Nebraska, from France. Four cents per acre was paid for land. Following this purchase, military exploring expeditions were sent to the Plains area. These exploring parties were to map, make treaties with the Indians, establish trade routes, report on natural resources, and study the geography of the area.



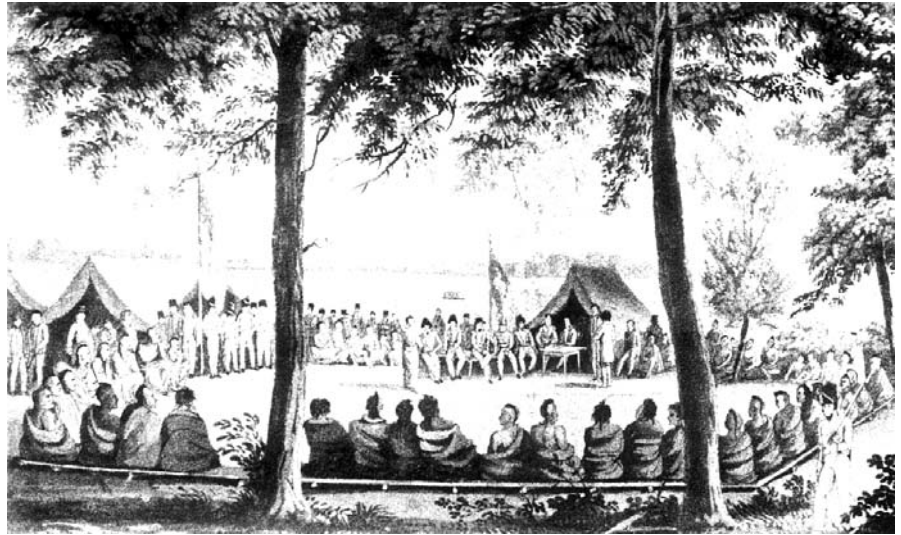
**ZEBULON M. PIKE**

**Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike** with 22 soldiers began his explorations in 1806. He escorted some Pawnee Indian chiefs to their village on the Republican River after a visit to St. Louis. They reached the village a few days after a much larger Spanish expedition had left. A Spanish flag was flying over the chief's lodge and Pike persuaded him to replace it with an American flag. Pike continued his journey to the southwest, where he was arrested by the Spanish who thought he was a spy. Later, he was freed and he returned home safely.

## STEPHEN H. LONG

**Major Stephen H. Long** of the U.S. Army Engineers was the leader of the first scientific exploration up the Platte River. His party included several scientists who studied the geography and natural resources of the area. In his report of the 1820 expedition, Long wrote

that the Plains from Nebraska to Oklahoma were “unfit for cultivation and of course uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture.” On the map he made of his explorations, he called the area a “Great Desert.”



## JOHN C. FREMONT

**Lieutenant John C. Fremont** led an Army exploring party across Nebraska to the Rocky Mountains in 1842.

Although he came to be known as the “Great Pathfinder,” hundreds of traders

and settlers had been over this trail before him. He and his wife Jessie published a report about the trail which encouraged others to use the same route to Oregon and California. The city of Fremont is named after this famous explorer.



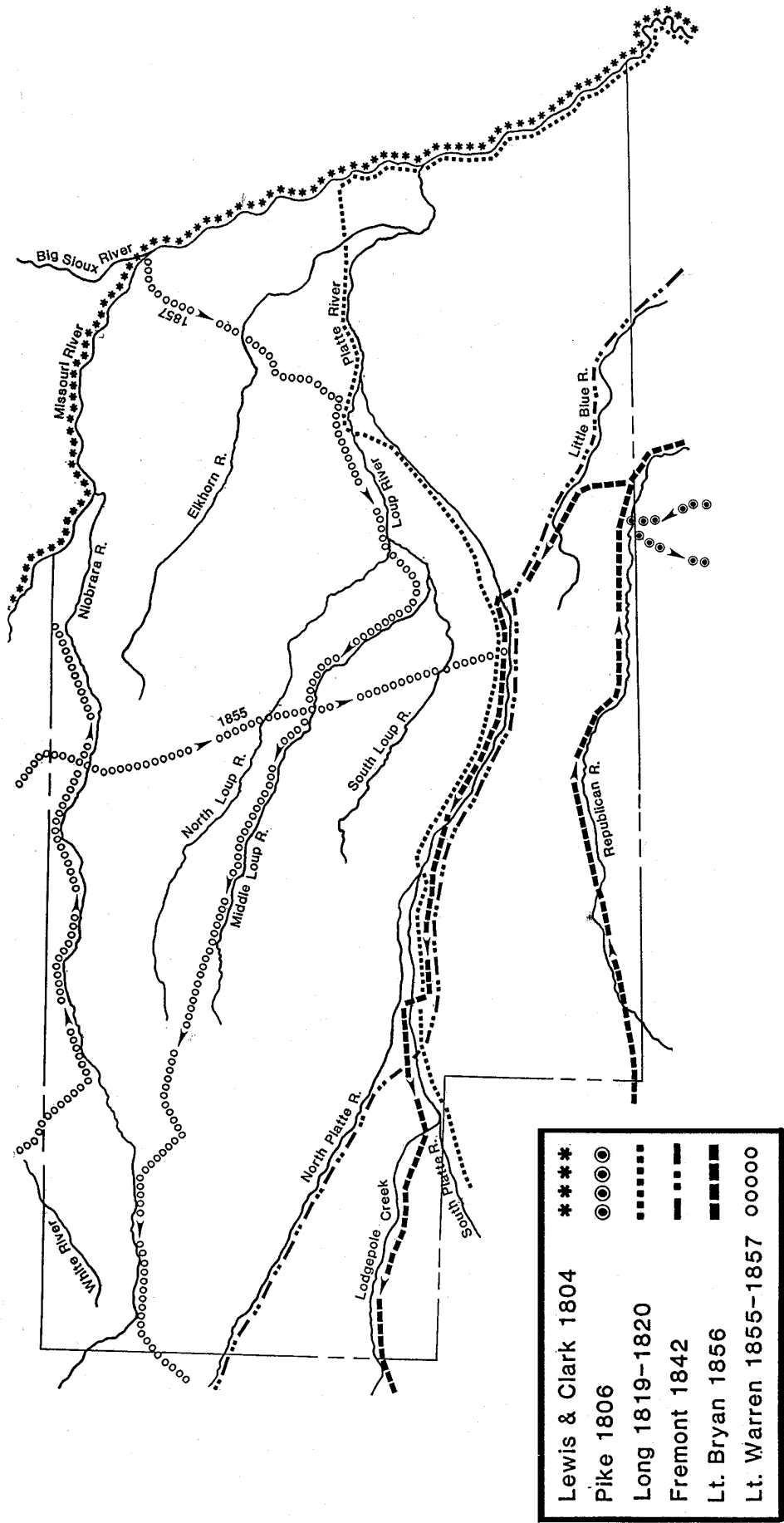
**JESSIE BENTON FREMONT**

## G. K. WARREN

**Lieutenant G. K. Warren** explored northern Nebraska in 1855 and 1857. He explored more of Nebraska than anyone else. There was a great need for more information about Nebraska after it became a territory and was opened to settlers in 1854. The U.S. Army was assigned the task of providing this information. **Lieutenant Francis T. Bryan** traveled across southern Nebraska in 1856.

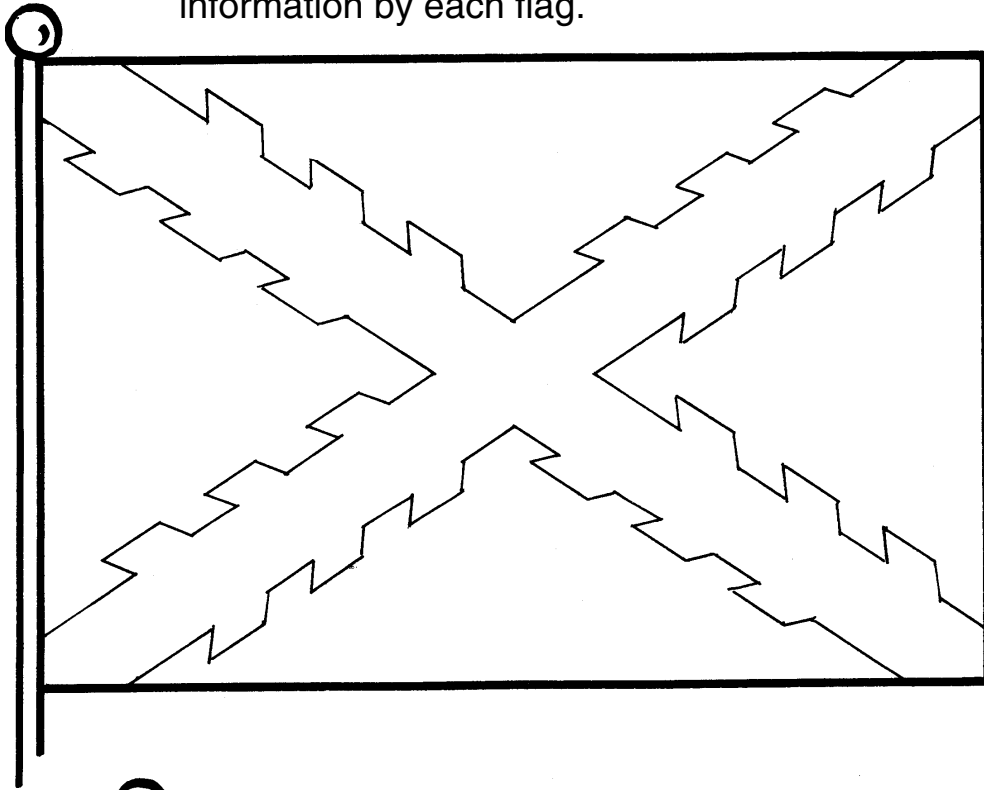


# EXPLORERS AFTER THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

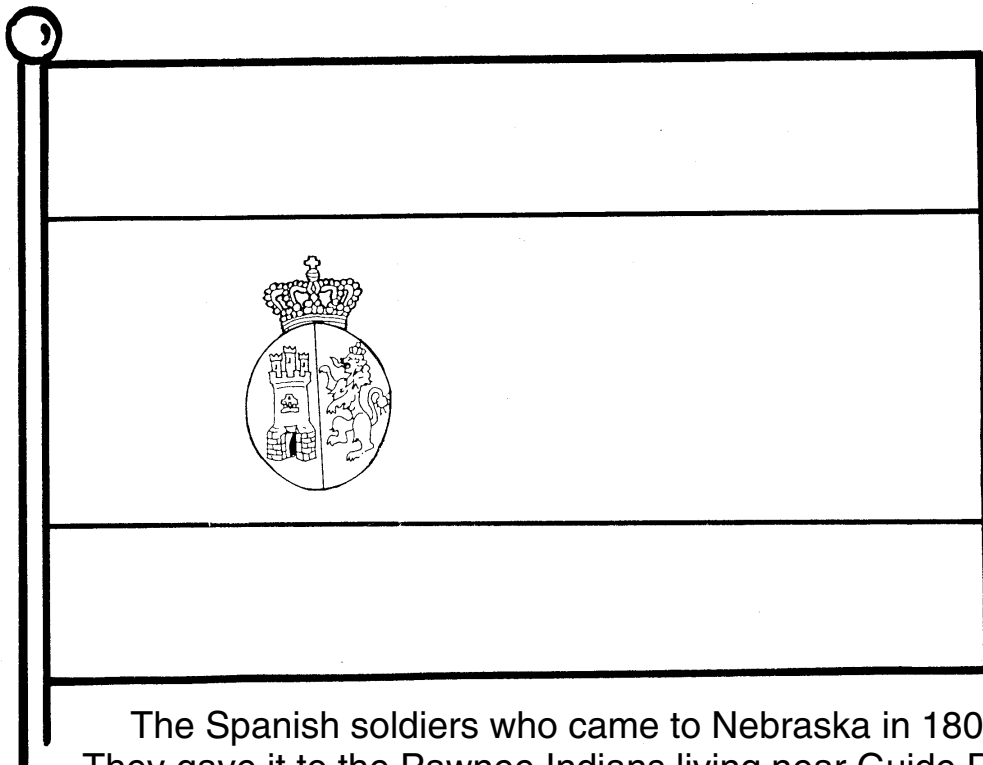


## FLAGS OVER NEBRASKA

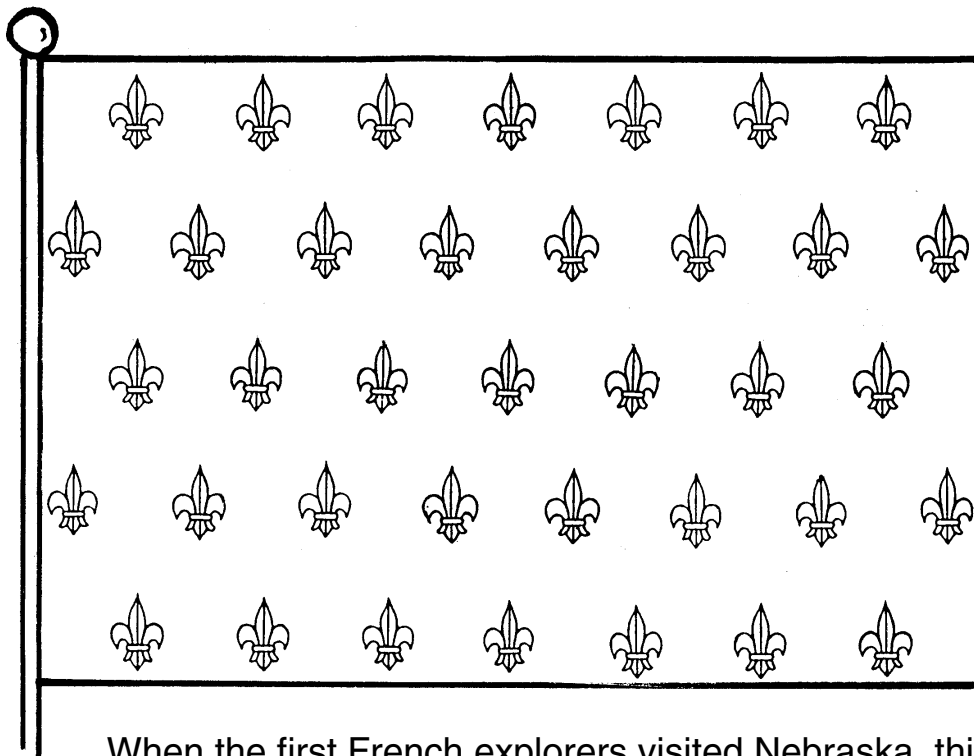
Many different flags have flown over Nebraska since the first Europeans came here. Color the flags below using the information by each flag.



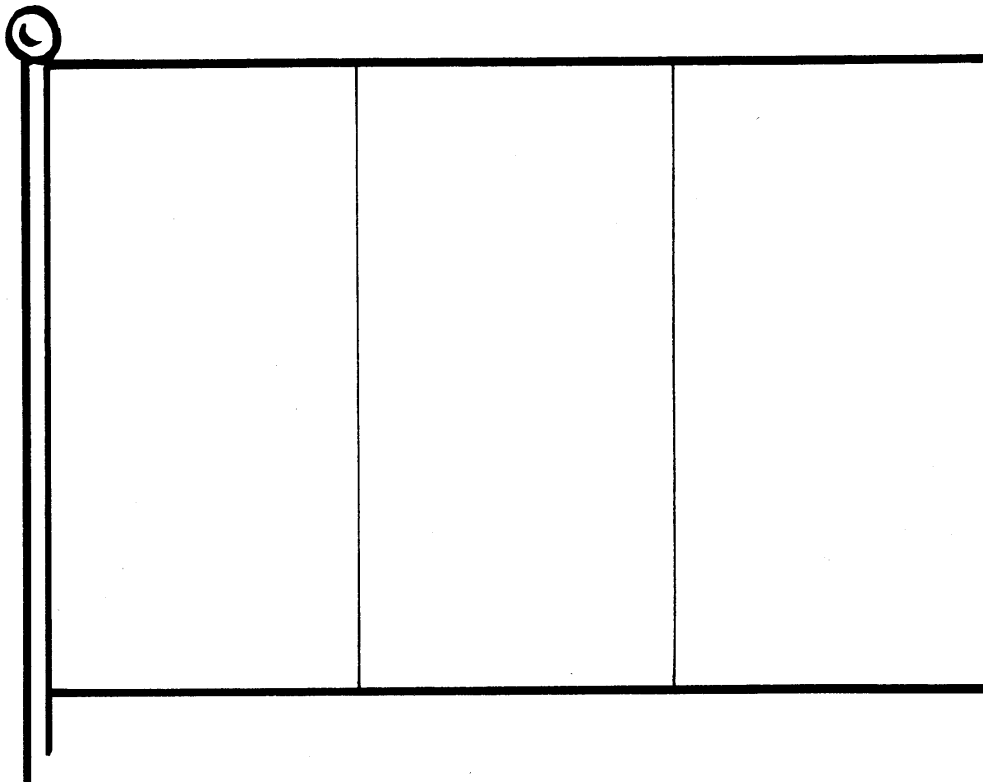
When Colonel Villasur came to Nebraska in 1720 with a Spanish army, this is what the Spanish flag looked like. It was white with a red cross or "X". Villasur and most of his men were killed in a battle with Pawnee and Oto Indians near where Columbus, Nebraska, is today.



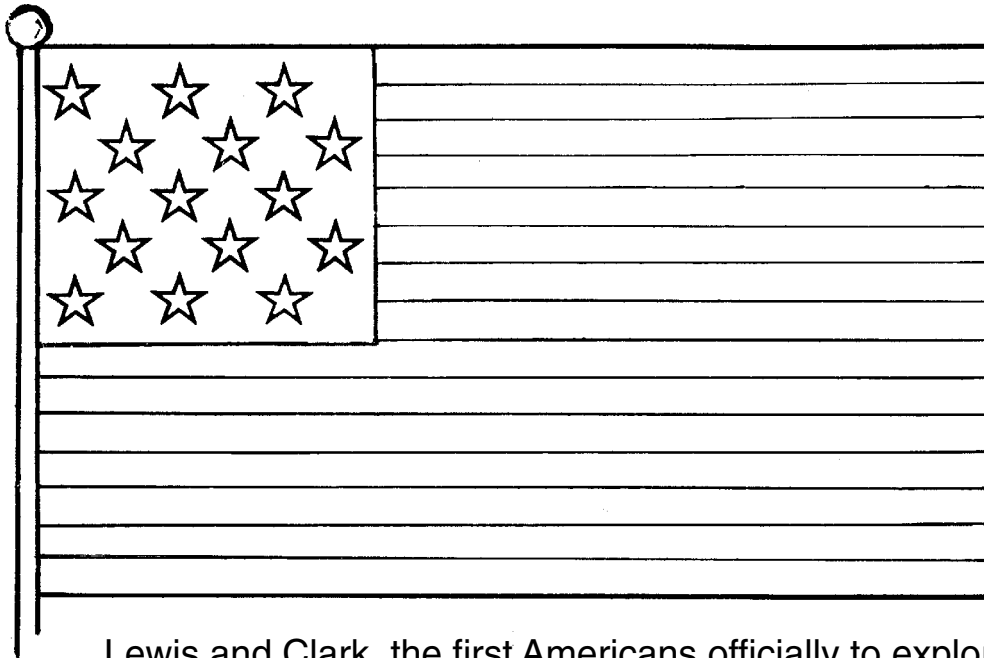
The Spanish soldiers who came to Nebraska in 1806 used this flag. They gave it to the Pawnee Indians living near Guide Rock, Nebraska. Later, the American explorer Zebulon Pike convinced the Pawnees to take the Spanish flag down and replace it with the United States flag. The top and bottom were red and the center stripe was yellow.



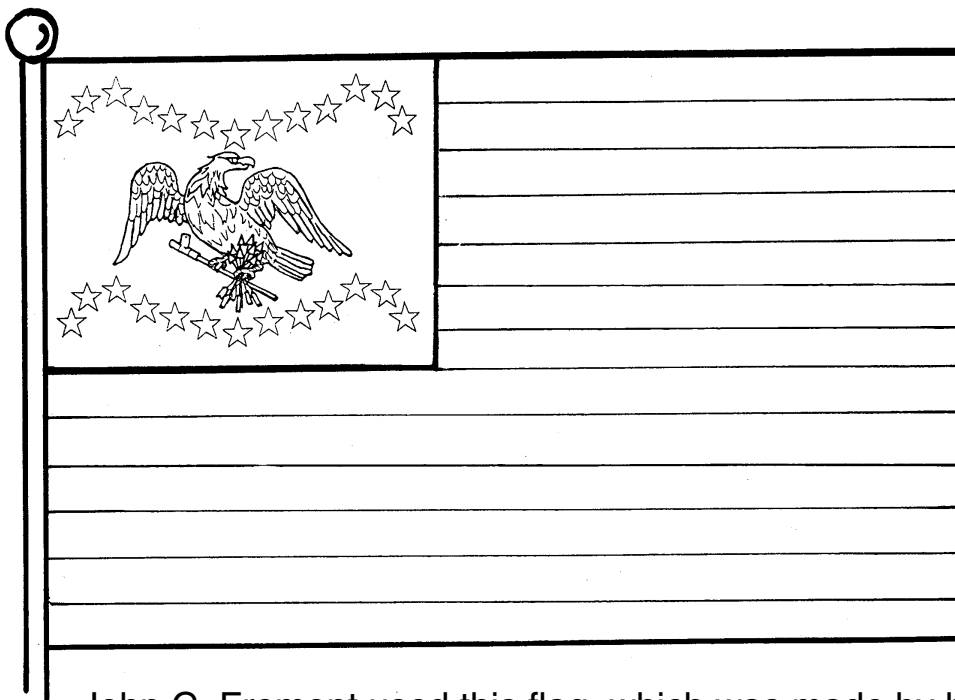
When the first French explorers visited Nebraska, this is what the French flag looked like. It was white with yellow *fleurs de lis*. Fleur de lis (pronounced flur-de-lee) is French for the iris flower which grows in Nebraska.



This is the French flag that was used in 1803 when France sold Louisiana Territory, including Nebraska, to the United States. The left stripe is red, the center stripe is white, and the right stripe is blue. This flag is still used by France.



Lewis and Clark, the first Americans officially to explore Nebraska, carried this flag with them up the Missouri River. It was a flag of this design that flew over Fort McHenry, Maryland, which inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner". It is colored just like our flag today, but it had fifteen stripes, and fifteen stars for the fifteen states. This flag design was in use from about 1794 until 1818.



John C. Fremont used this flag, which was made by his wife Jessie, when he explored Nebraska for the United States Army. It looked just like the regular American flag except it had a brown eagle holding a peace pipe and arrows in its talons (claws). The Indians who met Fremont on his trip across our state liked this flag very much. The stripes are red and white. The eagle and stars are on a white field. The stars are white outlined in blue.



## EXPLORER WORD SEARCH



### FIND THE EARLY NEBRASKA EXPLORERS:

See how many of the listed explorers' names you can find. Look back and forth, up and down, and diagonally, both forwards and backwards.

Lewis

Pike

Bryan

Clark

Long

Mackay

Pierre Mallet

Warren

Naranjo

de Bourgmont

Paul Mallet

Fremont