

By the Kansas Historical Society

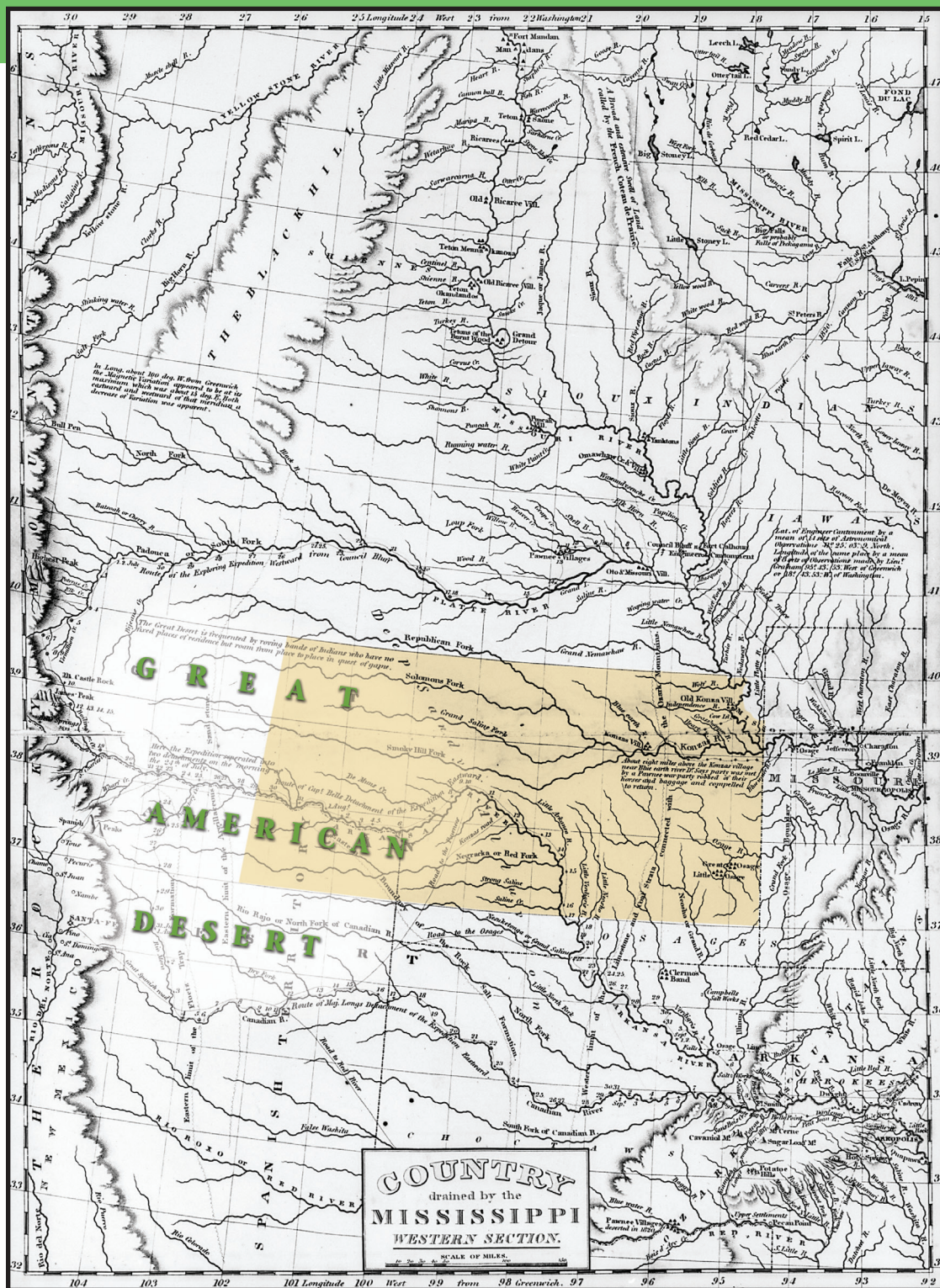
Major Long and the "Great American Desert"

On June 6, 1820, Stephen Long set out on a scientific expedition to find the Red River. Long was a major in the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers having taught two years at West Point as a part of his military career. While not successful in finding the Red River, Long and his men established diplomatic relations with American Indian tribes in Texas. Long's expedition then followed the Arkansas River into present day Kansas.

From this expedition Long published a map of the West. It is Long's popular map that is credited with branding Kansas and much of the Great Plains as "The Great American Desert." Kansas would suffer with the reputation of being a desert for many years before railroad marketing changed people's opinion of Kansas as a good place for farmers and other settlers.



Major Stephen Long's exploration route, 1819-1820.



Long's map published in 1822 that labeled much of the land east of the Rocky Mountains the "Great American Desert."