



The American Soldier, 1819

The westward sweep of American settlement and fur trading after the war of 1812 soon advanced beyond the Army's western posts. To protect these settlers and the growing fur trade, and to establish control over the northwestern Indians within the limits of the United States, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun proposed to establish garrisons on the upper Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Although his plan was not completely realized, by the fall of 1819 a considerable body of troops had advanced to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where they wintered. Near the encampment at Council Bluffs a United States Expedition under the command of Major Stephen H. Long, ordered to explore the "country between the Mississippi and Missouri," also wintered. Here in October 1819, Major Long, the Indian Agent Major O'Fallon, and other officers held council with the Otoes, Missouris, Iowas, and Pawnees.

In the right foreground is an infantry private in the simple uniform evolved during the War of 1812. The single-breasted dark blue coat has white buttons and the collar is laced with white binding. The cylindrical leather cap has a front raised above the crown and is trimmed with the white cords and plume and the black national cockade with an eagle button on it ordered to be worn by all troops in 1816. White cotton trousers and linen gaiters complete the summer dress uniform.

The Indian chief in the center is attired in the buffalo hide robe worn by most of his compatriots attending the council. On his left stands one of the scientists associated with the Long expedition. He is wearing the "United States Explorers" uniform, a dark blue coat with an embroidered gold star on the collar and plain gilt buttons. With this uniform coat he wears an ordinary civilian round hat and white waistcoat.

In the left foreground is Major Long, leader of the expedition. He is wearing the uniform established for the Corps of Engineers, a dark blue coat with black velvet collar and indented cuffs, flat yellow metal buttons with the device and motto of the Corps, and blue twist herringbone buttonholes on the breast and on the cuffs. On his collar he has the gold star encircled by a sprig of laurel. He wears the two gold epaulettes of a field grade officer, and over his red sash appears the black leather waistbelt with a yellow plate used by staff and Engineer officers.

In the background may be seen infantry musicians in red coats with white lace on the collars, the various officers and officials attending the council under the national colors, and an Indian treaty flag.