

establishing Army posts in the territory at Fort Vancouver near the Hudson's Bay Company post on the Columbia, and at Fort Steilacoom on Puget Sound, also near a Hudson's Bay Company post.

Nothing happened for eleven years. Then on June 27, 1857, the International Boundary Commission met aboard the British ship *HMS Satellite* in Esquimalt harbor. The American commission was headed by a civilian, Archibald Campbell, while the British commission was under the command of Captains James Prevost and John Hawkins of the Royal Engineers. The plan was to mark the boundary along the 49th parallel from the Strait of Georgia to the summit of the Rocky Mountains, a distance of some 400 miles.

The Americans were eager to get started, but the British party was delayed at sea, so the Americans started without them. The United States Commission established a base camp at Semiahmoo about a mile north of the 49th parallel in what was British territory. The camp housed 100 to 150 men in several rough wood buildings, each with a kitchen but no bunks for the men to sleep in. One also served as a hospital.

In the summer of 1858 the British finally arrived. They established a base camp a few miles east of present day Blaine. It, too, contained about 100 men, mostly laborers.

A joint effort was undertaken to mark a line along the 49th parallel, clear a path 20 feet on either side of the line, and mark the line with iron stakes and stone cairns every few miles. The line was confirmed by astronomical observations made by Lt. I.G. Parker of the US Topographical Engineers.

It was difficult work. The forest was thick with fallen timber, swollen streams, threats of attack by bears and other wildlife, rocky and steep ground, and particularly for the British, attacks by mosquitoes. Persistence paid off so that by the end of 1858 nearly 90 miles of boundary had been marked.

The survey party was escorted by a detachment of soldiers from Fort Steilacoom. In December 1858 the Americans were visited by US Army Inspector General J. K. F. Mansfield and his assistant, Major Irvin McDowell, who were conducting inspections of Army activities in the west.

The Fort Steilacoom detachment consisted of soldiers of Company F, 9th Infantry, commanded by Capt. D. Woodruff, and two additional officers, four sergeants, three corporals, 63 privates, and two buglers. Also attached were Surgeon I. H. Berrien and Lt. A. V. Kautz, 4th Infantry, who was acting quartermaster and commissary officer. General Mansfield reports that all was in good order except for seven prisoners who were in the guard house for desertion or other offenses.

Field work on the boundary continued and was completed in the spring of 1861. For the next thirty years little changed along the border. But by the 1890s settlements on each side caused both governments to reexamine the line and to more vigorously enforce it. The San Juan question had been resolved in favor of the United States, however there were some loose ends concerning the location of the line in north central and north east Washington. The British and American surveys were as much as 500 feet apart. Examination of the original drawings in 1898 resolved the differences.

In 1908 a new International Boundary Commission was formed to finalize any questions that might arise. Another agreement was reached in 1925 which established the commission as the caretaker of the boundary area.

At last the boundary question was settled. But was it? The curious



HMS Satellite was in Bellingham Bay in 1859.

status of Point Roberts, a US territory attached to Canada that can be entered by land only through Canada, still exists.

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The Boundary Question

by Kenneth A. Morgan

Who had jurisdiction over the Oregon Country? No one really knew. The Oregon Country is generally defined as that region of North America between 42 degrees north latitude (about the present Oregon/California border) and 54 degrees 40 minutes north latitude and west of the crest of the Rocky Mountains.

Claims were based on early exploration, commercial exploitation, and actual occupation. Russia, Spain, Great Britain, the United States, and even France all stated claims on the area. Of course it was the home of native populations, too.

Spanish authority claims were based on the *Inter caetera* and Treaty of Tordesillas of 1493-94. This treaty between Spain and Portugal was negotiated by Pope Alexander VI and delineated those countries rights to North America. Spain had established a colony on Vancouver Island, but in the 1790s had given up its rights to Great Britain. In 1819, as a result of the Adams-Onis Treaty, Spain had released any claims to the territory, and Florida, to the United States.

French assertions were weak at best. Based on early explorations and roamings by fur trappers, the French claims were settled in favor of the United States by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

Fur was big business in the early 19th century, and the Oregon Country was caught up in it. Russia, Great Britain, and the United States had established fur trading companies in the region.



The boundary between the United States and Canada became the 49th parallel.

The Russian-American Company was chartered by Tsar Paul I in 1799. It was supposed to operate north of 55 degrees latitude. The charter gave Russia trade rights and colonization rights along the Pacific coast, including adjacent islands, from the Bering Sea southward to the Columbia River and beyond. The Russians established settlements in

today's Sitka, Alaska, and Fort Ross in California. They also built a fort (Fort Elizabeth) in Hawaii. By 1820 reduced numbers of fur bearing animals lowered the profitability of the company and it was taken over by the Russian government. When Alaska was purchased by the United States in 1867, the company's activities were effectively ended.

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President's Message



Thank you Volunteers!

Volunteers have kept Historic Fort Steilacoom open since 1983 after a dedicated group, led by Lyle Dunkin, restored the four remaining officers' quarters. The buildings were opened to the public offering tours and reenactments for visitors to experience life as it was from 1849 to 1868 during the years the fort was active.

The current board, whose names are listed above on this page, and groups such as the Fourth US Infantry and the 20th Maine and other volunteers, continue tours and reenactments. From now until next spring the fort will be open on the first Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 p.m. with special programs in between.

You are invited to attend the remaining events on the 2015 schedule:

September 26: Museum Day Live

October 18: Annual Meeting

November 15: Military Uniforms

December 12: Christmas at the fort

Visit our website for updates to the program schedule.



Photo by Nancy Covert

Following a flag disposal ceremony assisted by cub scouts on June 14, historian Loran Bures presented a program about U.S. flag history.

A new monument has been placed between Quarters 1 and 2 by the Lakewood Historical Society. It commemorates the site of the Puget Sound Agricultural farm operated by Joseph Heath until his death on March 7, 1849. "Less than a month after the auction of farm implements and remaining effects...Major John S. Hathaway...and Captain Bennett Hill, of the First Artillery, arrived... seeking a location for an American Fort.... It was arranged for the United States government to rent the buildings and 20 acres of land for \$50 a month. By October, 75 men and 5 officers were remodeling the farm house, kitchen, barn, granary and other outbuildings into quarters.¹

The library renovation continues. Additional shelves have been constructed and painted and the newly donated books, along with the older collection, are being reorganized. Extra books will be available for purchase in the gift shop.

The architects have completed a plan for the repair of the quarters 3

foundation. D.S.H.S. will be publishing the plan to send to potential contractors for bidding.

If you want to become a member or volunteer at Historic Fort Steilacoom, go to our website (www.historicfortsteilacoom.org) and click "Contact" then scroll down to complete the form, or simply call us at (253) 582-5838.

U.S. flag history trivia

America's first flag of June 14, 1777, featured a circle of 13 stars, representing the original colonies, with 13 red and white stripes.

The "Star Spangled Banner" flag created in 1795 had 15 stripes and flew for 23 years.

The Civil War flag first had 34 then 36 stars. Stars representing southern states were not removed by Lincoln. More stars were added afterward as more territories became states.

During World Wars I and II the flag had 48 stars. The addition of Hawaii and Alaska later brought the number of stars to 50.

¹ Heath, Joseph, *Memoirs of Nisqually*, Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, WA, 1979, p. 171.

Boundary Question (from p. 1)

Captain George Vancouver, Royal Navy, made several voyages for the British Crown. Between 1791 and 1795 those voyages explored the Pacific Coast of North America, particularly the region which later became called the Oregon Country. He sailed into Puget Sound, sent small boats to survey the bays and inlets therein, named several of the prominent geographic features such as Mount Rainier, navigated the mouth of the Columbia River, and, of course, mapped it all. Because of his efforts, Britain had at least a partial claim on the territory.

That claim was exploited by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC). The Hudson's Bay Company was established by royal charter from King Charles II in 1670. Not only was it a trading company, but it was the *de facto* government in those areas not under the influence of other European nations. Initially it had jurisdiction over lands whose rivers and streams flowed into Hudson's Bay, but with westward expansion its authority expanded as well.

The North West Company was formed in Montreal in 1779 to directly compete with the Hudson's Bay Company. It, too, was concerned with the fur trade. Its agents, called "pedlars," roamed throughout the Rocky Mountains and the northwest. The North West Company found it increasingly difficult to compete with the Hudson's Bay Company, which had a monopoly on the land where the best furs originated. The company appealed to the British Prime Minister, but the appeals were not addressed. Decreasing profits finally led to the merger of the North West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company.

The United States had claims to the Oregon Country, too. Like the British claims, they were based on early exploration. When the United States purchased Louisiana from France in 1803, President Jefferson wanted to know what he had bought. Finding out was the task of the

Corps of Discovery Expedition (1803-1806). Led by Army officers Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark, the Corps explored, mapped, inventoried plant and animal life, contacted native peoples, and recorded and reported their findings to the President. During the winter of 1804-05 they established a camp, Fort Clatsop, at the mouth of the Columbia River.

When Captain Vancouver was exploring, so were the Americans. In 1787 a group of Boston merchants sent a two-ship expedition to the northwest coast. The lead ship, *Columbia*, was commanded by Captain John Kendrick, while the second, the *Lady Washington*, was commanded by Captain Robert Gray. While operating off the coast, Gray and the *Lady Washington* took on a load of furs for the China trade. Upon returning from China, Gray took command of the *Columbia* and resumed exploring the northwest coast. He found what he thought to be a bay, but what turned out to be a river which he later entered. He named the river after his ship, *Columbia*.

Americans wanted to cash in on the fur trade, too. John Jacob Astor founded the American Fur Company in 1808. Astor's plan was to establish a series of fur trading posts and collect the furs at the mouth of the Columbia, at today's Astoria, Oregon. From there they would embark a ship from New York and be traded in China for goods to sell in New York. The War of 1812 changed all that. Britain seized his posts, including the one in Astoria, and sold them to the North West Company. Decline in the desirability of fur as a fashion accessory and increased competition from the Hudson's Bay Company caused Astor to abandon the fur trade and enter the real estate business in New York, which made him the wealthiest man in the United States.

By the early 1800s there were really only two players in the game of who had jurisdiction over the Oregon Country: Britain and the United States. Several partition plans were proposed but none could be

agreed on. The Anglo-American Convention of 1818, which settled disputes from the War of 1812, allowed for the joint occupation of the Oregon Country for a period of ten years.

The Hudson's Bay Company actively discouraged settlement of the territory, but they were the only ones to do so. Americans wanted free land and began to trickle in. By the 1830s the Oregon Trail was well established and more and more settlers arrived. In 1843 a provisional government was established in the Willamette Valley at Champoeg, although it was not "officially" recognized by the Hudson's Bay Company. The ten years established in 1818 had long passed. It was time to do something.

Territorial annexation was the political "hot potato" of the 1840s. Texas had become independent in 1836 and southerners wanted to annex it as pro-slavery, while northerners wanted to annex the Oregon Country as anti-slavery. Britain, meanwhile, wanted control over all the Oregon Country north of the Columbia River.

The Oregon question was settled first. The United States and Great Britain signed a treaty on June 15, 1846, setting the boundary at the 49th parallel of north latitude, essentially extending the boundary between British North America and the United States as established by previous treaties and conventions. The Texas question was settled by the Mexican War.

The writers of the Treaty of 1846 were diplomats, not geographers, which led to a problem that almost brought the two countries to war. The question of ownership of the San Juan Islands was based on the location of the channel between Vancouver Island and the mainland (see the HFSA newsletter: Winter, 2011).

Just as in 1818, the Treaty of 1846 caused little to happen. The Hudson's Bay Company continued to operate; American settlers continued to travel the Oregon Trail. The United States, however, did "show the flag" by