

San Juan Island in the summer of 1859 was an international tinderbox. While sheep grazed peacefully on the green slopes of Bellevue Farm, military forces of Great Britain and the United States stood face to face in a confrontation that could at any moment erupt in violence and possibly plunge the two nations into war. The start of the crisis—the death of a pig!

The "Pig War," as the confrontation on San Juan Island came to be called, had its origin in the Anglo-American dispute over possession of the Oregon Country, that vast expanse of land consisting of the present States of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, and parts of Montana and Wyoming, and the Province of British Columbia. At the beginning of the 19th century four nations claimed this land: Spain, Russia, England, and the United States. Spain gave up her claim in 1819, when the Adams-Onís Treaty established the 42d parallel as the northern boundary of California. Russia withdrew hers in 1824-25, when the Emperor signed treaties with both England and the United States ceding all claims south of latitude 54°40'. Between 1825 and 1846 American pioneers battled British fur traders for control of the region between the 42d parallel and 54°40'.

Cool Minds Prevailed

Nations with clashing vital interests and a touchy "national honor" to protect have been pushed into war by incidents as trivial as the killing of the San Juan pig. These wars have often mushroomed into murderous affairs that destroyed property, art, and beauty of countless worth and took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Here on San Juan Island, however, men of imperious and belligerent disposition, on both the British and the American sides, found themselves opposed by their own associates. These were men of good will and common sense who preferred to talk to their opponents and to try to understand their viewpoints. They would not allow war to break out.

Here are biographical sketches of five men, two warlike and three peaceful, who made and settled the San Juan Island crisis. This small piece of land and its attendant islands will always be a reminder that insignificant causes, shrouded in national honor, need not be allowed to start wars.



James Douglas (1803-1877). Sir James was the principal member of a 3-man board of management of the Hudson's Bay Company operations west of the Rockies from 1839 until 1858. In that year, though already Governor of Victoria Island, he resigned from the management board to become governor of the newly formed colony of British Columbia. Sir James was a man of education, wide experience, and direct and forceful action. He could charm his opponents when necessary, but he depended upon aggressive action to accomplish his purposes. His years of success in the Pacific Northwest confirmed his liking for strong policies and action. When the valley of the Fraser River in British Columbia was invaded by 10,000 American gold prospectors, Douglas foresaw that they would settle and then claim the land for America. Upon his own initiative, he extended his authority as governor to the colony of Vancouver Island to cover British Columbia. The British Government approved his action and made him governor of the newly created colony in 1858. On San Juan Island, Sir James showed the same character. He was all for having the British Navy drive the Americans, both the soldiers and settlers, off the island.

Geoffrey Phipps Hornby (1825-1895). A navy captain at San Juan, he reached the pinnacle of his career in 1888 as Admiral of the Fleet. His father was also an admiral in the British Navy, and partly on this account his career was noted for frequent promotions and assignments to his liking. The Hornbys were landed gentry, enjoying a status and security that enabled Sir Geoffrey to view the disputes of other men with a certain dispassion. Though a man of war by training, he never ordered his ships to open fire. Overwhelming power helped him, but his personal tact and discretion, as vice admiral of the British Mediterranean Fleet in 1878, enabled him to bring his warships through the Dardanelles to support the Turks in Constan-



tinople, then under threat from the advancing Russian Army. Twenty years before, at San Juan Island, he had shown the same tact and discretion when he resisted the pressure of Sir James Douglas, Governor of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, to order his Royal Marines to take a belligerent stand toward a contingent of U.S. Army troops on the island.

William S. Harney (1800-1889). He was a soldier who made a practice of ignoring orders and disobeying his superiors. When he was a cavalry officer during the Mexican War he was court-martialed for one such flagrant transgression by Gen. Winfield Scott. Harney pretended acceptance of the court's decision while at the same time writing to the secretary of war complaining of his treatment by Scott. Probably because of Harney's family connections, the letter reached President James Polk. The President nullified the decision of the court-martial. On San Juan Island, nearly 20 years later, Harney had not changed. Now a brigadier general, he commanded the Department of Oregon which included San Juan Island. He again acted without instructions and ordered troops landed on the island, with the intent of risking a battle.



Their presence, under the guns of a British warship, constituted a direct and continuing confrontation of opposing armed power. So tense was this situation that even the accidental firing of a cannon could have started the battle that could have meant war.

Winfield Scott (1786-1866). This great conciliator spent almost his entire adult life in the United States Army. Early in his career he studied military tactics and training in France, then the greatest military power in Europe. And as commanding general of the Army from 1841 to 1861, he applied new training methods that greatly increased the Army's fighting effectiveness. Scott was not solely a desk general. When war broke out with Mexico, he devised a strategy that enabled him to conquer Mexico in a 6-month, six-battle campaign. But more typical of him were the five times during his military career that he settled disputes by talking instead of shooting. Three of these were danger-



ously escalating crises with Great Britain. The last was at San Juan Island, only 2 years before Scott's retirement from the Army and public life.

Hamilton Fish (1808-1893). Lawyer, politician, and statesman, he was governor of New York and a member of Congress, serving first in the House and then in the Senate. In 1869, he was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to be Secretary of



State. Perhaps influenced by the butcheries of the Civil War, Hamilton Fish became a staunch advocate of peace among nations during the 8 years he guided American foreign policy. In 1871, a conference of American and British diplomats drafted the Treaty of Washington, which for the first time in history provided for settlement of "national honor" differences by arbitration. Three disputes were arbitrated to mutual satisfaction: the damages caused to U.S. shipping during the Civil War by the British-built Confederate raider "Alabama;" fishing rights in the North Atlantic; and the San Juan Island dispute about the United States-Canadian border in the Pacific Northwest.

The Oregon Dispute

An Anglo-American agreement of 1818 provided for joint occupation of the Oregon Country. By 1845, however, this agreement had become intolerable to the Americans, who considered it an affront to their "Manifest Destiny." Motivated by the nationalistic pride generated during the Jacksonian era, they believed that continental expansion was the national destiny, and that whoever stood in the way of that destiny should be swept aside. It was right and necessary that the social and political benefits of American culture be spread from ocean to ocean and from pole to pole. "Who shall undertake to define the limits of the expansionability of the population of the United States?" asked Caleb Cushing in his Report on the Territory of Oregon in 1839.

"Does it not flow westward with the never-ceasing advance of a rising tide of the sea? Along a line of more than a thousand miles from the lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, perpetually moves forward the western frontier. . . . Occasionally, an obstacle presents itself, in some unproductive region of the country; or some Indian tribe; the column is checked; its wings incline toward each other; it breaks; but it speedily reunites again beyond the obstacle, and resumes its forward program, ever facing and approaching nearer and nearer to the remotest regions of the west. . . . This move-

ment goes on with predestined certainty, and the unerring precision of the great works of eternal Providence, rather than as an act of feeble man. Another generation may see the settlement of our people diffused over the Pacific slopes of the Rocky Mountains."

To many Americans, the idea that the great land west of the Rocky Mountains should remain under foreign influence was totally unacceptable. By mid-century the spirit of Manifest Destiny had carried the American frontier west to the Pacific and north as far as western Canada.

The British were determined to resist the tide of American migration sweeping across the Rockies and into the Oregon Country. They argued that the Americans had no right to settle there, that they were in fact trespassing on land guaranteed to England by treaties with Spain and Russia. These treaties, it was pointed out, entitled England to all the land west of the Rocky Mountains from the northern boundary of California and Nevada to the southern tip of the Alaskan Panhandle. Moreover, the British claimed ownership on the basis of early explorations by James Cook, George Vancouver, and Alexander Mackenzie, and through use by the long-established fur trading posts and commercial establishments of the Hudson's Bay Company, foremost among which was Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. The weakness of the legally valid British claim, however, was their failure to homestead the region.

Although both nations blustered and threatened over possession of the Oregon Country, neither sought to gain control of the whole region. The United States was willing to settle for an extension of the 49th parallel to the Pacific. Great Britain, on the other hand, would agree to the Columbia River as the southern boundary of western Canada, because she considered ownership of the river vital for command of the interior fur trade. Thus the region actually in dispute was a large squarish area of land between the 49th parallel and the Columbia River, about two-thirds of the present State of Washington. By 1845 a local clash was certainly possible with 5,000 Americans living in the Willamette Valley in western Oregon south of the Columbia River, as compared to 750 Britons gathered mostly about Fort Vancouver near the mouth of the Columbia and on Vancouver Island bordering Puget Sound 100 miles north. Indeed, there were some among the Americans who threatened to cross the Columbia, drive out the Hudson's Bay Company, and set fire to its establishments.

After 2 years of belligerent talk in the legislative halls of both Great Britain and America, and in the public press of both countries, wiser counsels prevailed and the Oregon question was resolved peacefully. The Oregon Treaty of June 1846 gave the United States undisputed possession of the Pacific Northwest south of the 49th parallel, extending the boundary "to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island; and thence southerly from the middle of the said channel and of Fuca's straits to the Pacific Ocean." But while the treaty settled the larger boundary question, it created additional problems because the wording left unclear who owned the San Juan Islands. The dispute that brought the threat of war over the Oregon Territory was to be reproduced in miniature over the ownership of those islands.

The San Juan Issue

The difficulty arose over the interpretation of that portion of the boundary described as the "middle of the Channel" separating Vancouver Island from the mainland. The men who negotiated the Oregon Treaty, like so many other 19th-century statesmen who drew boundary lines on crude maps, seem to have had little accurate geographic knowledge of the area whose fate they were deciding. There were actually two channels: one, Haro Strait nearest Vancouver Island, and another, Rosario Strait nearer the mainland. San Juan Island lay between the two. Great Britain realized that possession of the island would give them complete control of the nearby harbors of Victoria and Esquimalt, as well as the approach to the Fraser River. It therefore insisted that the boundary ran through Rosario Strait. The Americans, reinforced by the unequivocal doctrine of Manifest Destiny, proclaimed it lay through Haro Strait. Thus both sides considered San Juan Island theirs for settlement.

As early as 1845 the Hudson's Bay Company had posted a notice of possession on San Juan. In 1850 it established a salmon-curing station there,

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Safety Notes

Watch your step, especially in the vicinity of American Camp. The San Juan rabbit digs many holes that can cause sprained ankles and broken bones.

Swimming is discouraged because the water temperature remains below 50 degrees all year. Try beachcombing instead.

Tree climbing is dangerous for you and harmful to the trees.

Look out for insecure footing on the primitive trails and watch for overhanging branches and downed limbs.

Administration

San Juan Island National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Address all inquiries to the Superintendent, P.O. Box 549, Friday Harbor, WA 98250.

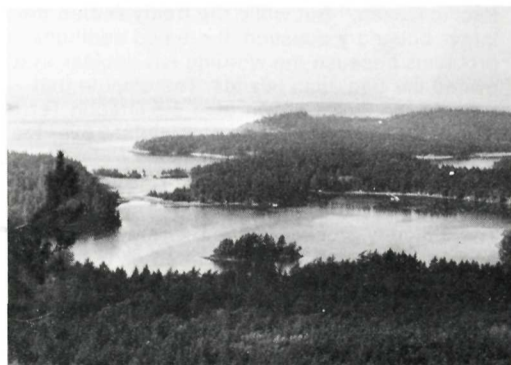
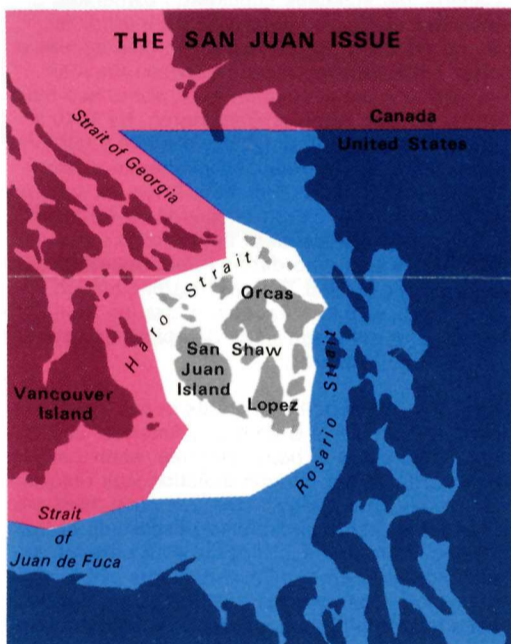
As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

and, 3 years later, a sheep ranch, called Bellevue Farm. About the same time, the Territorial Legislature of Oregon (which then included the present State of Washington) declared San Juan to be within its territorial limits, and in January 1853 proceeded to incorporate it into Island County. The following March, Washington Territory having been created, San Juan was attached to Whatcom, its northernmost county. A U.S. customs collector for the District of Puget Sound was assigned to the island.

Meanwhile, the Hudson's Bay sheep farm was successful and growing, and neither it nor the British Government recognized these American legislative actions taken to remove San Juan from British jurisdiction. When the U.S. customs officer attempted to levy duties on the Company's imports, it refused to pay. The Sheriff of Whatcom County assessed the farm's property, seized some sheep, and sold them at auction. The Hudson's Bay Company hotly protested the seizure and demanded several thousand dollars in damage. To calm an ugly situation, U.S. Secretary of State William L. Marcy proposed an American and British commission be set up to study and try to resolve the boundary problem. The commission met in 1857 but became deadlocked over the water boundary.

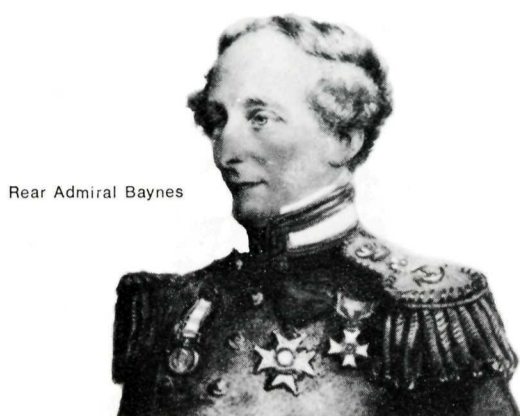
By 1859 there were about 25 Americans on San Juan Island. They were settled on redemption claims which they expected the U.S. Government to recognize as valid. These claims were considered illegal by the British. Compounding the matter was the fact that some of the Americans were settled on lands earlier claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Neither side recognized the authority of the other. Tempers were short and it would take little to produce a serious crisis.



A view from Young Hill shows Garrison Bay and the site of English Camp.

The Pig War

On June 15, 1859, an American settler named Lyman Cutlar saw a pig belonging to Charles Griffin, manager of the Hudson's Bay sheep farm, destroying his small potato patch. In a moment of anger, Cutlar shot and killed the animal. He agreed to pay for the pig, but an angry Griffin demanded \$100 in damages. When Cutlar, who valued the animal at no more than \$10, refused to pay, Griffin informed Governor Douglas who called in Alexander Dallas, President of the Council of



Rear Admiral Baynes

the Hudson's Bay Company in North America. Dallas, whose manner and language Cutlar considered both insulting and abusive, went so far as to threaten to take him to Victoria for trial; but Cutlar told Dallas that as an American citizen living on American soil he was not subject to British jurisdiction. Dallas withdrew, taking no action, but making it plain that the affair was not finished. The Pig War had begun.

The American settlers on San Juan, expecting reprisal, signed a petition to Brig. Gen. William S. Harney, a Mexican War veteran commanding the Department of Oregon, to protect them in their "present exposed and defenseless position" against the fierce and warlike Haida Indians of the north, who frequently came down from the Georgian Straits and the fiords of British Columbia and Russian Alaska to raid the area around Puget Sound. Though the Indians could be dangerous, the protection the American settlers wanted was against the British.

General Harney, who possessed strong anti-British attitudes and who looked upon San Juan as a fit location for a U.S. naval station, saw the settlers' petition as a fine opportunity to force the sovereignty issue. Reacting swiftly, he ordered Capt. George E. Pickett, later to gain fame at Gettysburg but then commanding Company D, 9th Infantry, to occupy San Juan Island with his troops. According to his orders, Pickett was first to protect the inhabitants of the island from incursions by the northern Indians and secondly "to afford adequate protection to American citizens" from English authorities.

Pickett's 66-man unit landed on July 27, 1859, and occupied a spot near the Hudson's Bay Company wharf, just to the northeast of Bellevue Farm. This position commanded Griffin Bay (then San Juan Harbor) on the north and the water approaches from the south. After mounting one 6-pounder cannon and two howitzers to defend his men against British interference, Pickett announced that San Juan was under American jurisdiction and its inhabitants subject only to American laws.

James Douglas, governor of the new Crown Colony of British Columbia, was outraged at the presence of American soldiers on San Juan. He had three British warships sent to dislodge Pickett but to avoid an armed clash if possible. Pickett, though overwhelmingly outnumbered, refused to withdraw and, according to General Harney, "nobly replied that whether they [the British] landed fifty or five thousand men, his conduct would not be affected by it; he would open his fire. . . ." Throughout the remaining days of July and well into August the British force in Griffin Bay continued to grow in strength, but Capt. Geoffrey Hornby wisely refused to take any action against the Americans until Rear Adm. Robert L. Baynes, commander of the British naval forces in the Pacific, arrived with instructions. Baynes was appalled at the situation and advised Douglas that he would not "involve two great nations in a war over a squabble about a pig."

Meantime, Pickett had been reinforced on August 10 by 64 men from Lt. Col. Silas Casey's command, but this meager force was still no match for the growing concentration of British vessels

and men. Casey had now assumed active command, and he apprised General Harney of the vulnerability of his position; the American commander ordered in reinforcements. By the 31st of August, 461 Americans, protected by 14 cannons and an earthwork, were opposed by five British warships in the harbor and nearby waters, mounting 167 guns and carrying 2,140 troops, including Royal Marines, artillerymen, sappers, and miners. The initiative lay in the hands of the British, but Admiral Baynes, over Douglas' angry protests, would not commit his force unless compelled to do so.

By this time word of the crisis had reached Washington, where officials were shocked to learn that the simple action of an irate farmer had grown into an explosive international incident. Greatly alarmed, the acting Secretary of War cautioned Harney that, while he was not to allow the national honor to be tarnished by the British, "It would be a shocking event if the two nations should be precipitated into a war." Meanwhile, Gen. Winfield Scott, commanding general of the U.S. Army, was quickly sent to investigate the affair. Scott arrived at Fort Vancouver on October 20 and reported, "I found both Brigadier General Harney and Captain Pickett proud of their conquest of the island and quite jealous of interference." Harney was officially rebuked, and afterwards recalled, for allowing the situation to get out of hand.

The British ships were drawn off and negotiations with Governor Douglas were opened by courier. Both sides eventually agreed to Scott's suggestion that a token force from each nation occupy San Juan until a final settlement could be reached. Casey's soldiers were withdrawn and replaced by others under a different officer. On March 21, 1860, British Royal Marines landed on the island's northwest coast and established on Garrison Bay what is now known as "English Camp."

Throughout all the months of military and naval bluster, the International Boundary Commission continued its work of marking the land boundary, which they finished during the joint occupation.

San Juan Island remained under joint military occupation for the next 12 years. The high level negotiations lapsed during the Civil War years. The American and British commanders were on friendly terms and the marines and soldiers followed their example, all parties celebrating major holidays together. A road was built connecting the military camps, and the island gradually adjusted to peaceful occupation by the two English-speaking nations.

In 1871, when Great Britain and the United States signed the Treaty of Washington, the San Juan question was referred to Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany for settlement. On October 21, 1872, the emperor ruled in favor of the United States, establishing the boundary line through Haro Strait. Thus San Juan became an American possession and the final boundary between Canada and the United States was set. On November 25, 1872, the Royal Marines withdrew from English Camp. By July 1874 the last of the U.S. troops left American Camp. Peace had finally come to the 49th parallel, and San Juan would be long-remembered for a military confrontation in which the only casualty was a pig.



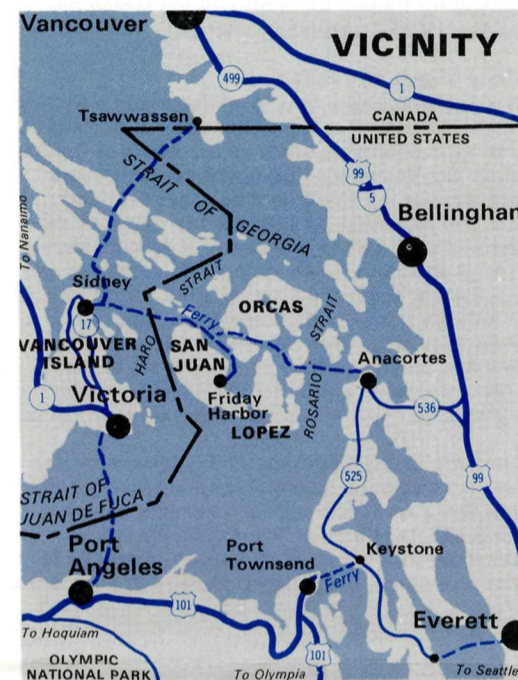
The blockhouse and barracks and the small formal gardens at English Camp have been restored.

About Your Visit

San Juan Island National Historical Park is open daily from sunrise to sunset. Although visitor facilities and conveniences are minimal, rangers are on duty to answer questions and explain points of interest. Visitor information is also available at park headquarters at Friday Harbor.

Open fires and hunting are not allowed. Firearms are not permitted in the park; pets are permitted but only when under physical control. Natural features and historical buildings or ruins are to be left undisturbed.

Friday and Roche Harbors have commercial sleeping accommodations. They also have restaurant facilities. There are small commercial trailer parks near Friday Harbor. The county-owned San Juan Park, midway between English and American Camps on the west side of the island, also has camping facilities. It is advisable to plan your visit carefully, because accommodations and facilities are limited on San Juan Island.



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What To See At American Camp

American Camp is on the barren and windswept southeast tip of the island, about 5 miles south of Friday Harbor. While no original buildings survive, their former locations are known; the National Park Service plans to define and restore the grounds and earthworks. The remains of the Redoubt, the principal American defense work, are well preserved. The redoubt originally contained gun platforms and heavy cannon designed to cover Griffin Bay and the Juan de Fuca Strait. The American Camp site is near the present Cattle Point Road and the Redoubt. Foundations and blackened posts are believed to be the sites of a hospital and a row of quarters.

Old San Juan Town, the first town in the Griffin Bay area, was just east of a small tidal pool on the north side of American Camp. Legend has it that the town was a notorious and lively community; it was destroyed by fire in 1890. A recent archeological survey has identified several building sites.

Bellevue Farm, the successful sheep and livestock ranch owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, was located a short distance south of the American Camp. Little remains of the original buildings but their former locations are known.

What To See At English Camp

English Camp lies in the tree-sheltered cove known as Garrison Bay, about 10 miles northwest of Friday Harbor. All the English Camp buildings have been restored. In the barracks during the summer, there is a small temporary exhibit and an audiovisual show. Self-guiding trails lead through the wooded Bell Point area and to the cemetery.

How To Reach The Park

San Juan Island is reached by Washington State Ferries from Anacortes, Wash., 83 miles north of Seattle; or from Sidney, British Columbia, 15 miles north of Victoria. The island is also accessible by private boats. There are good docking facilities at Friday and Roche Harbors. Commercial air flights are scheduled regularly from Bellingham and Seattle, Wash., to Friday Harbor. Private one- and two-engine planes can land at airstrips at Friday and Roche Harbors.