

Spanish possessions of Mexico and California, and west of the Mississippi river. On the north and west of it was a very indefinite boundary, and it is very questionable whether the French title added much strength to the claim of the United States to that region bordering on the Columbia river. From the Mississippi to the Rocky mountains it was good enough as far north as the headwaters of the Father of Waters, but west of the great continental divide the French had no claim whatever except the uncertain one of "contiguity," which its successors to the title made the most of in the subsequent controversy with Great Britain.

Immediately after purchasing Louisiana, congress dispatched an exploring expedition, under the command of Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clarke, who left St. Louis in 1804, and returned again in 1806, having twice traversed the distance between that city and the mouth of the Columbia. They made a fairly accurate map of the region within a hundred miles on either side of their route, and for the first time something definite was known of the character of the country and the native tribes occupying it. In 1810 John Jacob Astor organized the Pacific Fur Company and dispatched two expeditions to the mouth of the Columbia, one by sea and one by land. The ship *Tonquin* arrived off the river in March, 1811, and Mr. Astor's partners built near the mouth of the stream a post which they called Astoria. This was the first actual settlement on the Columbia, though an unsuccessful effort had been made the year before by American traders at Oak Point, some forty miles up the stream. The land party, after the most terrible experiences, reached Astoria in February, 1812. Upon learning of Astor's plans, the Northwest Company sent a party overland, but it did not reach the mouth of the Columbia until three months after Fort Astoria was built, and at once returned. The war of 1812 gave the English company another opportunity. A second party was dispatched overland, which reached Astoria in the spring of 1813, bringing intelligence of the hostilities and of the disheartening fact that an English war vessel was on the way to capture the fort. Under stress of circumstances the property was sold to the agent of the Northwest Company in October, and in December the fort was surrendered to the commander of the *Raccoon*, which had come for the purpose of capturing it.

In 1817 the United States dispatched the sloop *Ontario* to the Pacific, to receive the surrender of Fort George (Astoria) in accordance with the terms of peace at the treaty of Ghent, notice of intention to reoccupy the captured fort having been given two years before. This brought matters to a crisis at

once, and a spirited discussion of the subject followed, involving the question of abstract rights by discovery and absolute rights by possession, both parties claiming under both titles. The claim of the United States to title was four fold: First, as a portion of Louisiana, purchased from France in 1803; second, by right of discovery by the Spanish explorers, Ferrello in 1543, and later Perez, Aguilar, Heceta, Bodega y Quadra (Cuadra) and others, the benefit of whose discoveries accrued to the United States by the Florida purchase made in 1819, (this title was not asserted in the first negotiations, as the purchase was made subsequent to the first temporary settlement); third, by reason of the discovery of the Columbia river by Captain Robert Gray, in 1792; fourth, by reason of the explorations of Lewis and Clarke and the establishment of posts at Astoria and two other points by the Pacific Fur Company, denying that the sale of these posts, effected under duress of threatened capture by a man-of-war, was such as to effect the right of the United States to the benefits to be derived from settlements made by its subjects, especially as the terms of peace provided that they should again be surrendered to the United States government. On the contrary, Great Britain claimed that the country north of the forty-second parallel was originally discovered by Francis Drake in 1578. Drake was an English freebooter, who plundered the Spanish commerce in the Pacific, and was knighted for his success in that business. Ten years later, he commanded a portion of the fleet which defeated the great Spanish armada sent by King Philip to overwhelm England. To make this claim effective, it was necessary to deny that the prior voyage of Ferrello had extended as far north as the Oregon line. As the coast had also been explored by Cook and Vancouver, and had been visited by Meares and other English fur traders, all between 1775 and 1793, these facts were urged as supplementing the original discovery of Drake. It was also necessary to deny that Gray discovered the Columbia river, and to do this it was claimed that the entrance of the river by him was but one step in a series, that the discovery was a successive one, participated in by Heceta, Meares and Vancouver, who had observed the mouth but supposed it to be only a bay, by Gray, who had actually entered the estuary of the river, and by Broughton, who had explored it in a boat for a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. Its claim by right of possession was based upon the establishment, in 1805, of a fort on Fraser lake, by Simon Fraser, an agent of the Northwest Company, and the purchase, by the same company, of the property of the Pacific Fur Company, the Northwest Company then holding possession of the Columbia region by means of posts at Astoria and other points along