

3. United States' Coast Survey Chart of Alaska No. 960, 1884.
4. United States' Coast Survey Chart No. 710, Revilla Gigedo Channel, 1885.
5. "United States' Pacific Coast Pilot," Alaska, Part I, 1883.
6. Treaty between the United States and Russia for the cession of Alaska, 30th March, 1867.

Inclosure 1 in No. 3.

*Mr. Bayard to Mr. Phelps.*

Sir,

*Department of State, Washington, November 20, 1885.*

SHORTLY after assuming the duties of this Office, my attention was drawn to the circumstance that the existing boundary-line between the territory of Alaska and Her Majesty's possession of British Columbia, is not only open to doubt in certain quarters, although not in doubt so far as this Government is concerned, in respect of the water-boundary from Prince of Wales' Island and through the Portland Channel, but that it is, also, with regard to the inland frontier, which is supposed to follow a mountain range, an impracticable one to survey, if not a geographical impossibility.

The territory of Alaska was acquired by the United States from Russia, subject to the existing demarcation of the eastern frontier-line between Russian America and British America, under the Convention between Great Britain and Russia of the 16th (28th) February, 1825, and the description of the line contained in Articles III and IV of that Convention was incorporated literally—as to the English text thereof—in the 1st Article of the Treaty between the United States and Russia concluded on the 30th March, 1867. Copies of the latter Treaty are hereto annexed for your information.

I am not aware that any question concerning the true location of the line so stipulated ever rose at any time between Great Britain and Russia prior to the cession of Alaska to the United States. If any such question had arisen, and was pending at the time of the cession, the United States would naturally have succeeded to the Russian interest therein just as to any other right of Russia affecting the ceded territory. This Government, however, had no intimation then, and has had none since, from Her Majesty's Government, that any such question existed. It is not thought likely, however, that question in this regard could have existed, as the inlet, and the country through which the boundary-line of 1825 ran, were in 1867 still practically unexplored. The boundary was then, as it is still, a theoretical one, based, as it is fair to be presumed, on the charts which the negotiators had before them in 1825, and which they doubtless assumed to be a substantially correct expression of geographical facts.

It is certain that no question has arisen since 1867 between the Governments of the United States and Great Britain in regard to this boundary.

The ascertainment of the true line of demarcation under the Anglo-Russian Treaty would, however, appear to have been the subject of informal consultation soon after Russian Alaska passed to the United States, but no record of any official correspondence between the two Governments is found.

In his annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1872, President Grant, after referring to the then recent settlement of the San Juan Island dispute, said:—

"Experience of the difficulties attending the determination of our admitted line of boundary, after the occupation of the territory and its settlement by those owing allegiance to the respective Governments, points to the importance of establishing, by natural objects or other monuments, the actual line between the territory acquired by purchase from Russia, and the adjoining possessions of Her Britannic Majesty. The region is now so sparsely occupied that no conflicting interests of individuals or of jurisdiction are likely to interfere to the delay or embarrassment of the actual location of the line. If deferred until population shall enter and occupy the territory, some trivial contest of neighbours may again array the two Governments in antagonism. I therefore recommend the appointment of a Commission, to act jointly with one that may be appointed on the part of Great Britain to determine the line between our territory of Alaska and the coterminous possessions of Great Britain."

An estimate of the probable cost and time of a survey of the Alaskan boundary-line on the part of this Government, then made, fixed the cost at about 1,500,000 dollars, and the time required as nine years in the field, and at least one year more for mapping the results: which illustrates the magnitude of the labour.