

Historical Note.*

(1818 to 1846.)

1818.

IN 1818 an agreement was come to between the Government of His Britannic Majesty and that of the United States respecting the boundary line between the British and United States territories in North-Western America.

It was agreed in substance that for the space extending from the Lake of the Woods eastward to the Rocky (then called the Stony) Mountains, the boundary line should be the 49th parallel of north latitude.

With respect to any country that might be claimed by either party on the north-west coast, westward of the Rocky Mountains, it was agreed that for ten years the same should be left open to its harbours and the navigation of its rivers should be free and open to the vessels, ships, and subjects of the two Powers; with a proviso that the agreement was not to prejudice any claim which either party might have to any part of that country.

This agreement was embodied in a Treaty made at London, 20th October, 1818.

The district between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific, or part of it, came to be known as Oregon or the Oregon Territory or district, the name being taken from the Oregon River, now usually called the Columbia.

The northern boundary of this district, as it was in question between the two Governments, was the parallel of 54° 40' north latitude, being the southern boundary of Russian territory, as recognized by Treaty. The southern boundary was the parallel of 42° north latitude, being the northern boundary of the Spanish territory, as recognized by Treaty.

The British Plenipotentiaries who negotiated the Treaty of 1818 acceded to the agreement relating to the country west of the Rocky Mountains in the hope that by leaving that country open to the trade of both nations, they substantially secured the present advantage, while removing all prospect of immediate collision, without entering any further discussion for a definite settlement. In their judgment, the American Plenipotentiaries were not authorized to admit any territorial claim of Great Britain in that quarter to the southward of the Straits of Fuca, although they would have consented to leave those straits and the waters connected with them in the possession of Great Britain.

1824.

In 1824 negotiations were resumed for the settlement of questions between the two Governments, including the question of the boundary west of the Rocky Mountains.

The British Plenipotentiaries contended for the right of British subjects to make settlements in the disputed territory, a right which they maintained was derived not only from discovery, but also from use, occupancy, and settlement. They proposed that Article III of the Treaty of London of 1818 should cease to have effect, and that the boundary line of the Rocky Mountains should be drawn due west to the point where the 49th parallel strikes the great north-easternmost branch of the Oregon or Columbia River, as shown on the maps as McGillivray's River, thence down along the middle of that river, and down along the middle of the Oregon or Columbia to its junction with the Pacific Ocean.

The proposal of the United States' Plenipotentiaries was to the effect that the term of ten years limited in Article III of the Treaty of 1818 should be extended to ten years

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* Referred to in the Statement, page 1, par. 3.