

published, I was prepared, without delay, to enter upon the settlement of the question, and so informed the British commissioner.

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In consequence of an accident to her machinery, which detained her some time at Rio Janeiro, the steamer Plumper did not arrive at Vancouver's Island as soon as she was expected. Captain Prevost awaited her arrival until the close of October, when he concluded to enter upon the determination of the boundary line without further delay. The joint commission met on the 26th day of October, and Captain Prevost, expressing his regret at the continued absence of Captain Richards, stated that he had had opportunities of verifying the general accuracy of the Coast Survey chart of the channels and islands between the continent and Vancouver's Island, and was willing to adopt it for the purpose of determining the boundary line. We therefore proceeded to the discussion of the subject, which resulted in a correspondence, a copy of which is herewith transmitted for your information as embodying fully our respective views in regard to "the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island;" through which, according to the treaty, the boundary line is to be traced.

From a perusal of the correspondence it will be perceived that for a portion of the distance between the forty-ninth parallel and the Straits of Fuca, we disagree as to "the channel" referred to in the treaty; the British commissioner claiming Rosario Straits and I maintaining the Canal de Haro to be "the channel." Between these two channels are several islands, embracing a space of about 400 square miles, the sovereignty of which is involved in a decision of the question. Captain Prevost finally proposed such a compromise as would throw within the territory of the United States all the islands but San Juan, the largest and most valuable of the group. Being fully satisfied, from my own observation, that the Canal de Haro is the main channel, and consequently "the channel" intended by the treaty, and being supported in this opinion by indisputable contemporaneous evidence of the highest official character, I declined to accede to any compromise. Captain Prevost thereupon proposed a reference of the whole matter to our respective governments, to which proposal I also declined to accede, but informed him that I should report the proceedings of the joint commission to my government, and at the same time submit all the correspondence on the subject.

Deeming this course to be the proper one under the circumstances, I have the honor to lay before you a copy of the proceedings and correspondence above referred to for your consideration and action thereon, and for such further instructions in relation to the determination of the water boundary as may be deemed advisable and necessary by the department.

The speech of Senator Benton of June 18, 1846, on the ratification of the treaty, to which frequent reference is made in the accompanying correspondence, will be found in the appendix to the Congressional Globe, volume sixteen, first session twenty-ninth Congress, 1845-'6, page 867. And I would respectfully refer you to your own speech on the same occasion, in which you confirm the correctness of my views in regard to "the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island." At the time of my discussion with the British commissioner, I was not aware of the existence of this important additional contemporaneous testimony. Although differing with Mr. Benton in the construction to be placed upon many points of the treaty, and opposing its ratification as firmly as Mr. Benton advocated it, there is no disagreement between you as to the meaning of the language of the treaty defining the boundary line now in dispute. In commenting upon the first article of the treaty you thus describe the water boundary:

Vancouver's Island is separated from the continent by an arm of the sea about two hundred and fifty miles in extent; different portions of which are known by different names. One part is called the Straits of Fuca; another the *Canal de Arro*; another the Gulf of Georgia; and the fourth, Queen Charlotte's Sound.