

The treaty specified that the boundary should pass through Bering Strait and continue along the meridian line between Krusenstern and Ratmanoff (Big and Little Diomedé) Islands “due north, without limitation” into the Arctic Ocean.¹² The successful British and Canadian argument was that “the geographical limit thus projected towards the north could have been intended only to define the ownership of such islands, if any, as might subsequently be discovered in this imperfectly explored ocean.”¹³ Evidently, in 1897 Dawson remembered this interpretation. He and Deville then employed meridian lines to define the area of the still “imperfectly explored” northern ocean within which Canada laid claim to all islands, known and unknown. The indefinite projection of the two boundary lines towards the north was also consistent with the model provided by the 1867 treaty.

By the end of 1897, therefore, Canada had taken some important steps towards securing its northern sovereignty. There was active occupation and administration in the western Arctic; an official expedition had been sent to the eastern Arctic; and the new Order-in-Council provided notification to other governments about the sector that Canada considered its own. However, much remained to be done in the way of actual occupation before the Canadian claim would gain international recognition.

Part Two, 1898-1918

During the years between 1898 and the end of the First World War, Canada sent out a total of seven northern expeditions, all motivated by sovereignty concerns. State-sponsored polar voyages had become rare in the late nineteenth century, but sovereignty issues helped to revive them. Overall, Canada was a latecomer to Arctic exploration, but it sent out some of the first official expeditions of the twentieth century.

Three of the Canadian expeditions were entrusted to government officials, A.P. Low (fig. 10) of the GSC and Charles Constantine and J.D. Moodie (fig. 11) of the NWMP. The other four were led by men who saw exploration as their primary calling in life. Both Joseph Bernier (fig. 9) and Vilhjalmur Stefansson (fig. 17) were highly successful in bringing Canada’s northern claims to public attention, but they were also exceptionally controversial figures. Because of their clashes with government personnel, the practice of hiring outsiders would never be

¹² “Treaty concerning the Cession of the Russian Possessions in North America by his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias to the United States of America,” *Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 15 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1869), pp. 539-544. See also United States, State Department, Office of the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, *International Boundary Study No. 14, U.S.-Russia Convention Line of 1867* (1965).

¹³ United Kingdom, Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers, C. 6918, *Behring Sea Arbitration: Case Presented on the Part of the Government of Her Britannic Majesty* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1893), pp. 98-99. The 1965 State Department publication cited above endorses this interpretation. However, it directs that, because the United States does not accept the sector theory, despite the phrase “without limitation” the line should never be depicted on US maps as extending beyond 72° N. latitude.