

III. From the discoveries and settlements of American citizens.

If priority of visitation gives the right to the territory, Sir Francis Drake visited the shores of this country in 1581, Captain Cook in 1777, Captain Meares in 1786, Vancouver and Broughton in 1791-2. The first American navigator did not appear until 1792. If exploration of the rivers and lands give the right to the territory, Captain Carver, a subject of England, had visited the source of the Oregon River in 1768. The North West Fur Company had established trading posts on the Columbia River in 1804; it was not until 1806 that Messrs. Clark and Lewis, an American expedition, passed down the valley of the Columbia to its entrance into the sea. If America contends that a proprietary title has been acquired by the first visitations and explorations of her citizens, she can only be entitled to a very small portion of the territory; inasmuch as her citizens have visited but a very small portion of the country—the greater part of it having been pre-visited by the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company, who are the subjects of Great Britain. The Law of nations has hitherto been, "that the navigators of any nation, who first visited the shores of any country, acquired for their Sovereigns, whose subjects they were; not only the shores, but the rivers running into the seas they visit." Upon this principle have all the Colonial possessions of Spain, Portugal, France, England, and Russia been secured.