

The limit to the Russian possessions on the continent of America established by the treaty of 1825 is in part a natural boundary and in part a meridian line. From the head of Portland Canal it follows the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast (subject to an alternative proviso to be considered hereafter) as far as the intersection of the same by the 141st degree of west longitude, and thence along that meridian to the Polar Sea. The negotiations we have been considering related to the south-eastern or natural boundary of the coast strip.

Meanwhile the miners of Cassiar were pushing their way northward through the mountain passes and down the valley of the Yukon river, in certain small tributaries of which, as far back as 1836, deposits of gold had been found. Several of these streams, notably 'Forty Mile Creek,' were known to be crossed by the 141st meridian, though no one could say exactly where the line ran. As its ascertainment was a matter of urgency, the Canadian Government in the summer of 1887 sent out surveyors who astronomically determined the points of intersection both with respect to the Yukon and to Forty Mile Creek. Two years later the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey despatched a party on a similar mission. The result of their observations at the Yukon differed about 600 feet from that of the Canadian survey, but at Forty Mile Creek the two very nearly coincided. Nothing further was done for some years, when on the eve of the Klondike discoveries the United States Government proposed, with respect to this survey, that where discrepancies occurred between the results of American and Canadian experts as to the correct geographical co-ordinates of one and the same point, a position midway between the two locations should be adopted. Canada accepted this offer to 'split the difference.' She also agreed to a characteristic proposal of the United States Government made at the same time. Near the intersection by the 141st meridian of the mountains parallel to the coast, Mount St. Elias rears its lofty crest full 18,000 feet above the level of the sea. As the highest mountain on the American continent, it should as a matter of course, in the estimation of the good people of the United States, have been situated within their borders. Unluckily for them, it stands more than two miles east of the 141st meridian, and is thus indisputably within British territory. Canada was invited to repair this oversight on the part of nature by consenting to a deflection of the southern portion of the line so as to make it range with the