

head waters of the Columbia, and on the authority of Washington Irving, was the first white man who descended the northern branch of that river from so near its source. He followed the river to its mouth, calling at all the Indian villages, presenting them with British Flags and planting them at the forks of the rivers, proclaiming formally that he took possession of the country in the name of his Sovereign the King of Great Britain for the North West Fur Company.

In the same year, 1811, John Jacob Astor, of New York, having discovered the lucrative nature of the Fur Trade, projected the *American Fur Company*, a rival establishment to the North West Fur Company. This Company established a trading port at the mouth of the river Columbia, and attempted in concert with the Russians, to monopolize the trade with China. In this Mr. Astor met with but misfortune and loss. His first ship was destroyed and the crew murdered on the Oregon coast, and the second wrecked on an island in the Pacific. The fort of Astoria was in possession of the British during the last American war, but was yielded to the American Fur Company, under the treaty of Ghent, which provided, "that all places, territories, and possessions whatsoever; taken by either party during the war, except some situated on the Bay of Fundy, shall be restored without delay." After a series of reverses the trading establishment of Astoria, with the ports established by the same company on the Spokane River, and at the confluence of the Okanegan with the north branch of the Columbia were sold to the British North West Fur Company, and has remained in the possession of the British to the present time. This visionary scheme, so badly carried out, has had the good fortune to find an historian in that fascinating and popular author—Washington Irving. The magic of his pen has given to this ill-digested and fruitless scheme of a money-making German, the appearance of a grand national undertaking, and the wretched wooden stockade of Astoria, a celebrity little inferior to that of any city on the American continent.

HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE.

In the year 1818, the boundary line between the British possessions and the United States occupied the attention of the respective governments; the result was, the adoption of the 49 parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Foot of the Stony Mountains. The Oregon territory was then a matter in dispute. The American government, under the administration of Mr. Monroe, offered to continue the 49 parallel from the Rocky Mountains westward to the Pacific.

Great Britain on the other part offered the 49 parallel from the Rocky Mountains to its junction with Macgillivray's river and thence down the middle of the channel of the Columbia to the sea, leaving the navigation of the river free to both nations, with the addition of a small detached territory north of the Columbia—the country north of the river to belong to Great Britain, and that south to belong to the United States.

Both of these offers being rejected, negotiations resulted in the convention of that year, by which it was agreed "that any country that may be claimed by either party on the north-west coast of America, westward of the Stony Mountains, shall, together with its harbours, bays and creeks, and the navigations of all rivers within the same, be free and open for the term of 10 years from the date of the signature of the present convention to the vessels, citizens, and subjects of the two powers: it being well understood that this agreement is not to be construed to the prejudice of any claim which either of the two high contracting parties may have to any part of the said country, nor shall it be taken to affect the claims of any other power or state to any part of the said country; the only object of the high contracting parties in that respect being, to prevent disputes and differences among themselves."

In 1824 the same offers were respectively made and refused for the same reasons, and the convention of 1818 was left unchanged.

In 1846, the same offer was again made by the United States, under the administration of Mr. Adams, with the addition of the free navigation of the River Columbia, south of that latitude. The negotiation of this year resulted in the convention of 1827, "by which it was agreed to continue in force, for an indefinite period, the provisions of the third article of the convention of the 20th of October, 1818; and it was further provided, that it shall be competent, however, to either of the contracting parties, in case either shall think fit, at any time after the 20th of October, 1828, on giving a due notice of twelve months to the other contracting party, to annul and abrogate this convention; and it shall, in such case be according entirely annulled and abrogated after the expiration of the said term of notice."

This was the state of the question when Mr. Polk succeeded to the presidency of the United States. The Oregon had just become a popular question, and his administration adopted the popular cry for their line of policy. At the time when Mr. Polk came into office, the matter was then the subject of negotiation, and great fault has been found with him in interfering before the negotiations had terminated, as evincing a desire to keep the matter from being finally settled. The President's first official notice of this subject is contained in the following:—

Extract from Polk's inaugural address delivered March 4th, 1845:—"Nor will it become in a less degree my duty to assert and maintain by all constitutional means the right of the United States to that portion of our territory which lies beyond the Rocky Mountains. Our title to the country of the Oregon is clear and unquestionable, and already are our people preparing to per-