

most ample extent, our  
rights in possession while  
(.)

title of the United  
States of France, con-  
ceded to Clark, by the for-  
mer occupation, and  
Britain.

our case. By the  
cession to the Unit-  
ed States north of latitude  
38 degrees 30 minutes, an im-  
portant cession.  
of mutual ces-  
sion. Mr. Adams,  
of a long life of pub-  
lic life, in the rights of his  
country, and who negoti-  
ated for its favorable  
cession to the United States  
of Florida, a cession of  
the coast of the Oregon; to  
afflict with our own

whole country to  
parallel of latitude.  
her Mexican pos-  
sion, and discovery and  
occupation. Hernan  
the prosecution of  
1526, the northwest-  
ernmost of California.  
her expeditions fit-  
ting the sixteenth and  
seventeenth and  
in 1582 to latitude  
42 degrees, who is said to  
be named to the bay  
of whose voy-  
age formerly dis-  
puted by N. Am. Dis-  
coveries, believed by some  
to be the Oregon; \* De  
the parallel of latitude 54 degrees  
of them, should be  
it is perfectly cer-  
e. Instead of be-  
ing in tranquility, pos-  
sion, extended her voy-  
age along the coast

navigation, prior to  
discovery in that  
He was a pirate,  
of Spanish Amer-  
ican private war,  
possibility, landing to  
the peaceful people  
be brave and enter-  
prising such for the mis-  
adventure the cruises  
discovery I will not  
to credible account

Vizcaino's expedi-  
tion, says that Martin  
of the fleet,  
"no se halló en río  
de entrar por el, los  
Humboldt, how-  
ever the Columbia; but  
"Spaniards in 1775,  
of Heceta and  
Bodega. (Humboldt's

of his voyage carries it beyond latitude 42 or 43; and the  
landing that he made in order to claim title was in latitude  
38 degrees 30 minutes—within the acknowledged limits of  
the Spanish province of California.

And without dwelling upon these old voyages in the  
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we have that of Pe-  
rez in 1771 to latitude 54 degrees, and of Quadra in 1775  
to latitude 57 degrees—both anterior to that of Cook; fol-  
lowed by Arteaga in 1779, Martinez in 1788, Elisa in 1790,  
and Malaspina in 1791, carrying up the Spanish discov-  
eries to the strait of Juan de Fuca, and even to Prince  
William's Sound, all of them preceding Vancouver. All  
the title of Spain, acquired in the various modes usual in  
such cases, is now vested in the United States by the Flori-  
da treaty; and, united with the other sources of title pos-  
sessed by us, constitutes a right of dominion not to be  
shaken by any European Power.

In addition to, and independent of all which, the natu-  
ral progress of population westward by extension, on the  
ground of contiguity, would give us a claim of title supe-  
rior to that of any other nation, we occupying and settling  
indisputably to the very heart of the continent.

In fact, our title south of latitude 54 degrees is practically  
admitted by all the rest of the world, except Great Britain.  
An old agreement existed between Russia and Spain, by  
which the former was left undisturbed in the extreme  
northern latitudes of Alaska. (N. Amer. Review, No.  
61, p. 506.) After the conclusion of the Florida treaty, a  
convention was entered into between the United States and  
Russia, whose deportment towards this country has always  
been distinguished by dignity and liberality—the conven-  
tion of the 17th April, 1824, which closed the door against  
any difference between us in that quarter, by an agreement  
that Russia would make no settlement on the northwest  
coast of America south of latitude 54 degrees, and the  
United States none to the north of it; thus fixing that  
parallel as the line betwixt our respective pretensions. But  
the conduct of Great Britain has, I am compelled to say,  
been marked by rapacity, illiberality, and gross disregard  
of our just rights, strikingly contrasted with the honorable  
procedure of Russia.

Desirous of settling this matter fairly and liberally  
with Great Britain, the United States, in 1823, under the  
authority of President Monroe, and in 1826, under that of  
President Adams, while justly entitled to claim, by virtue  
of its own title, and that of Spain and France, to latitude  
54 degrees, offered to Great Britain to compromise the  
question by extending the northern line of Louisiana—that  
is to say, the parallel of 49 degrees—to the Pacific; thus  
conceding to Great Britain five degrees of latitude on the  
Pacific, and enabling her to accomplish her desire to ex-  
tend her possessions across the continent from sea to sea.  
In so doing, we should, in fact, cede a portion of our just  
rights, which cover the whole of the valley of the Columbia;  
but the love of peace, and the consideration that Louisiana  
was bounded by latitude 49 degrees, would have justified  
such an arrangement. To this Great Britain obstinately  
refused to accede. And I must now ask the attention of the  
House to the nature and extent of her pretensions.

I assume, as the result of the arguments which I have  
thus cursorily presented to the House, that the United  
States have a clear title to the Oregon Territory, as against  
any and every European Power, extending from latitude  
42 degrees, the line of the Mexican Republic, to latitude  
54 degrees, the line adjusted with Russia. I admit, in  
pursuance of the negotiations of 1823 and 1826, that it may  
be wise to settle the matter, as between us and Great Brit-  
ain, at latitude 49 degrees, striking the Pacific in the strait  
of Juan de Fuca. And I hold that the United States can-  
not, in safety or in honor, concede any thing more than this.

Between these limits Great Britain is unable to claim any  
territory, by merely sailing along the coast and touching  
here and there, because preceded in that by navigators in  
the service of Spain; all whose right is vested in the Unit-  
ed States by the Florida treaty.

Great Britain cannot claim it as a dependency of the ri-

ver Columbia, because anticipated in the navigation of that  
river by Gray; in the exploration of it by Lewis and Clark;  
in the occupation of it by Lewis and Clark and by Mr.  
Astor.

Great Britain is precluded from claiming it as residuary  
territory of hers, under the title by which she formerly held  
this country, because prevented by the treaty of 1763 be-  
tween her and France, in which she disclaims irrevocably  
beyond the Mississippi; the seventh article being in these  
words:

"The confines between the British and French possessions  
in North America shall be fixed irrevocably by a line drawn  
along the middle of the Mississippi from its source to the river  
Iberville, and from thence, by the middle of the river Iberville  
and the lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain, to the sea."—(Chal-  
mer's Tr. vol. 1, 473.)

Great Britain is forbidden to claim it as parcel of the old  
North American possessions still retained by her in virtue  
of the treaty of Paris, because the decision of the commis-  
sioners under the treaty of Utrecht establishes the line of 49  
degrees westward of the Lake of the Woods. The rule of  
extension by contiguity would, to be sure, if no other con-  
siderations intervened, carry her possessions to the Pacific;  
but it would be along the parallel of 49 degrees, because  
the same rule of extension would carry us to the Pacific.

That is to say, Great Britain is, upon all principles of in-  
ternational law, and by her own solemn contracts, debarred  
and stopped from any and every species of exclusive right  
or claim whatsoever, south of latitude 49 degrees, and west  
of the Lake of the Woods, to the Pacific.

Accordingly, conscious of the utter futility of any such  
claim, Great Britain makes no claim to sovereignty over  
any part of the territory in question. Her pretension ex-  
tends to the whole of the territory, but is preferred by her  
in the shape of a pretended right of joint occupancy of every  
part of it in common with other Powers, leaving sus-  
pended in abeyance the right of exclusive dominion as to  
any part of it.

This extraordinary pretension of hers is grounded on  
the Nootka Convention as it is commonly called—a treaty  
extorted by her from Spain in 1790, under circumstances  
of passionate injustice, which, even at that stormy period,  
when the Powers of Europe were accustomed to fly to violence  
upon the smallest real or imaginary injury, was barely  
tolerated by the world, and which, in the present more en-  
lightened times of general aversion to war, could not es-  
cape the severest reprobation. This convention confers a  
claim as against Spain only, and so much of our right as  
we derive from Spain. The substance of it is, that subjects  
of either of the two parties, Great Britain and Spain, are  
not to be disturbed by the other, whether in navigating or  
fishing in the Pacific ocean, or in landing on the coast, in  
places not already occupied, for the purpose of carrying on  
commerce with the natives, or of making settlements there.  
I shall not trouble the House with the multiplied details of  
this question, as between Great Britain and Spain. Inde-  
pendently of the force and effect of it in that relation, there  
are several answers to it on the part of the United States.  
It settles no definite limits of territorial jurisdiction. It  
leaves the question of sovereignty upon the titles of Spain  
or France. Being a convention of usufruct only, and not  
of territorial jurisdiction or of sovereignty, it might be ob-  
ligatory on Spain so long as she retained the jurisdiction,  
but not upon her successor in sovereignty. Beyond which  
the United States hold under France as well as Spain;  
and still more by discoveries of their own, followed by ac-  
tual occupation, that occupation having been recognized by  
the authorities of Great Britain.

It only remains, for the disposal of this part of the di-  
plomatic question, that I should state the actual position  
of it upon the treaties between the United States and  
Great Britain.

By the treaty of Paris, September 3, 1783, our boundary  
is, beginning at the Lake of the Woods; "thence through  
the said lake to the most northwestern point thereof, and  
from thence on a due west course to the river Mississippi;  
thence, by a line to be drawn along the middle of the said