

zen of the United States. In the year 1787, the expedition of which the ship *Columbia* formed part, was fitted out by the sagacious liberality and enlightened enterprise of several citizens of Boston, for the purposes of commerce and discovery on the Northwest coast. From the log-book of the *Columbia* we learn that on the 11th day of May, 1792, Captain Gray discovered the mouth of the *Columbia*; and, crossing the bar, "found this to be a large river of fresh water, up which he steered." Here they remained until the 20th.

That Captain Gray was the first to discover the *Columbia* river, it is believed, is not now denied. It only remains to inquire whether the discovery has been followed up by such possession and acts of ownership as manifested an intention on the part of the Government of the United States to appropriate the territory thus discovered. A reasonable time to manifest this disposition must depend upon the circumstances of each case. In the opinion of the committee, the only equitable rule is this: that such a length of time must have elapsed after the discovery as, under all the circumstances of the party making it, shall repel the presumption of his intention to follow up the discovery by actual possession; or, in other words, that the right to take possession is abandoned. It will be recollected that, at the time of this discovery, the United States had just commenced the organization of a new Government; that for many years afterward its undivided attention was required to its relations with foreign nations, to guard its own interests from the aggressions to which they were constantly exposed by the great belligerent powers of France and England. These circumstances, and indeed the whole history of the United States for the next twenty years, sufficiently account for their inattention to this new territory, without giving any countenance to the idea that they had abandoned their claim, or in the slightest degree weakening their right growing out of the discovery. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the propriety of this rule, there can be no doubt that the first discovery, followed by the first possession, no matter at how remote a period, constitutes a perfect title; and it is equally clear, that in case of simultaneous possession by two parties, one of whom is the discoverer, the right shall be in him.

In 1803, the expedition which was placed under the direction of Captains Lewis and Clark, was planned by Mr. Jefferson and approved by Congress, who made the necessary appropriations for carrying it into effect. The object was to ascend the *Missouri* to its source in the Rocky Mountains, and, crossing that ridge, to explore the *Columbia* from its source to its mouth in the Pacific. This duty was performed by those officers with great intrepidity, judgment, and fidelity; their journal furnishing a large amount of useful information relative to the geography, the Indian tribes, and the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of those vast regions. Having crossed the mountains early in October, 1805, they descended, in their canoes, *Lewis* River to its junction with the *Columbia*, and down that river to its mouth, where they arrived on the 14th day of November. Having selected a proper site, they built the houses necessary for their accommodation, and a fort for their protection during the winter, which was passed in making such examination of the surrounding country as the season would permit. Early in the spring, being seriously apprehensive of want of provisions, they anticipated the period originally fixed for their return. Before leaving the country, they gave certificates to several of the chiefs, as "traces and evidences" of their having been there. With the same view, a paper was also posted up in the fort, to the following effect: "The object of this last is, that through the medium of some civilized person, who may see the same, it may be made known to the world that the party consisting of the persons whose names are hereunto annexed, and who were sent out by the Government of the United States to explore the interior of the continent of North America, did penetrate the same by the way of the *Missouri* and *Columbia* rivers, to the discharge of the latter into the Pacific ocean, where they arrived on the 14th day of November, 1805, and departed on the 23rd day of March, 1806, on their return to the United States, by the same route by which they had come out." On their return homeward, they divided into two parties: Captain Lewis carefully examining *Clarke's* River and its principal branches; while Captain Clarke, crossing over to the *Yellow Stone*, descended that river to its junction with the *Missouri*, where the two parties reunited; thence they proceeded to *St. Louis*, and the two officers reached *Washington* in February, 1807. The practicability of crossing the Rocky Mountains being thus satisfactorily established, the attention of our citizens was attracted to this quarter by the quantity and quality of the furs, which were said to be excellent and abundant.

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