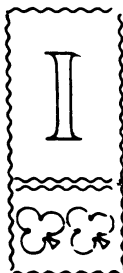


SAN JUAN AND SECESSION



IN 1853, by act of congress, that portion of Oregon territory north of the Columbia river and north of the 46th degree, north latitude, to the east of the Columbia river, where that degree crosses said river, was set apart and organized as Washington territory.

In 1853 the autonomy was organized by Isaac I. Stevens, the first governor (an ex-engineer officer of the United States army, highly distinguished in the Mexican war), and en route to the Pacific coast conducted a railroad survey across the continent, but who resigned to accept the offices of governor and superintendent of Indian affairs in Washington territory.

In 1854 the legislature organized counties and defined their boundaries. The Haro archipelago was included in Whatcom county.

When the assessor went the rounds of his county, he found on San Juan island a large flock of sheep, and assessed them as the property of the Hudson Bay company; the chief trader, Mr. Charles John Griffin, notified the assessor that the island belonged to Great Britain. When the tax collector called to collect the taxes, the chief trader ignored him and his credentials, claiming he was on a British isle. The sheriff then visited the island to collect delinquent taxes, when he was informed that the island belonged to her majesty, the queen of Great Britain! Whether the island did or did not belong to the queen was not for him to decide; he had come to collect the delinquent taxes, and, not receiving pay, he levied on a band of sheep, and sold at public auction some thirty head or more to cover the amount assessed and the costs of collecting.

James Douglass, the presiding officer of the Hudson Bay company in British America, and the governor of Vancouver island, in May, 1855, protested to the governor of Washington territory (Stevens), against such proceedings, assuring him that San Juan and all the islands of the Haro archipelago were within his jurisdiction and under the protection of the British laws; that he had the orders of her majesty's ministers to treat these islands as part of the British dominions: all, of course, to little effect.

He then caused an account to be made out, showing the number of rams and ewes seized and sold, and of constructive damages resulting from the removal of their rams and loss thereby of lambs. These he caused to be forwarded to the British minister in Washington City, D. C., to present to the secretary of state of the United States, and demand indemnity for the past and security for the future. These papers were duly presented to Governor Marcy (secretary under President Pierce), who, on referring to the treaty to ascertain if San Juan island was English soil or not, was confounded by the peculiar wording of the first article of the treaty—no channel was named, so the boundary was to follow the middle of a channel undetermined. His broad mind recognized at once that San Juan island was within "fairly disputed limits." The treaty not having disposed of it, the island had not been relieved from the operation of the treaty of 1827, of joint occupation.

On the 14th of July, 1855, Governor Marcy, in that terse English of his, wrote to Governor Stevens that "He (the president) has instructed me to say to you