

force was approaching forcibly to dispossess them, the managers sold "all the establishments, furs, and property," to the Northwest Company. The report of the approach of a British force was soon verified; for, in December following, the Rackoon British sloop of war arrived at Astoria, of which Captain Black took possession, substituted the English for the American flag, and changed the name to Fort George.

From this narrative, it appears that the Americans were the first to discover the river Columbia, and first to take possession of the territory through which it passes. The committee has no doubt that the United States has thus acquired a title to that whole territory, of more validity than that of any other nation. As the British Government now refuses to acknowledge the claims of the United States either to the original discovery or possession, (the *discovery was admitted by Vancouver*;) the committee will advert to the facts and reasons by which they justify this refusal.

The pretensions of Captain Gray to the honor and right of the discovery are contested, because it is alleged that, at the same time, Alexander Mackenzie, a British subject, discovered the northern branch of that river. If that allegation be true, it certainly produces some difficulty. That it is not true, we have the testimony of Mackenzie himself, who has left us the only account of his travels. Peace River rises in the Rocky Mountains in latitude 55° , and, running generally a northeast course, empties into Slave River in latitude 59° . The entire river is east of the mountains. But on this river Mackenzie tells us he spent the winter of 1792-93; that, for the accommodation of his party, on the 7th of December, 1792, he "set all hands at work to construct the fort, build the house, and form store-houses," at a point which he ascertained, "by various observations," to be in latitude $59^{\circ} 9'$ north, and longitude $117^{\circ} 35' 15''$ west. This place they left on the 9th of May, 1773, and, ascending Peace River on the 17th, came in sight of the Rocky Mountains. We have seen that, in May, 1792, Gray had discovered the mouth of the river—that, so far from the river being simultaneously discovered, the American discovery was at least one year before the British, even if Mackenzie ever touched the river. His own account gives no reason to suppose that he did. He says that, after crossing the Rocky Mountains, he came to a large river, which he descended for several days in a canoe; but, becoming discouraged by the difficulties of the navigation, he determined to make an effort to reach the Pacific Ocean by land. For this purpose he returned up the river to a point from which he had resolved to advance west by the shortest route to the ocean, where they arrived July 22nd, in latitude $52^{\circ} 23' 43''$. This river, he tells us, was navigable, and, by his account, he reached it in about 56° north. None of the sources of the Columbia are north of 54° . The source of the Columbia is directly south of the source of Peace River; but the object of Mackenzie (to reach the Pacific) would carry him west, and not south. The Columbia is known not to be navigable at any point where it is possible Mackenzie could have touched it. The river asserted to be the Columbia he left on the 4th, and arrived at the ocean on the 22nd of July—an interval in which it is impossible they could have performed the journey, which could not have been less than four or five hundred miles in the most direct route. Mackenzie's general course from the river was southwest; and yet he informs us that, on the 10th, after six days' travelling, he found the latitude to be $53^{\circ} 4' 32''$, which is nearly as far north as any of the sources of the Columbia. For these reasons, the committee is led to the conclusion that Mackenzie did not see the Columbia River. He himself admits that he did not do so until June, 1793, leaving Captain Gray the undisputed discoverer.

The committee submits the following extract of Mr. Greenhow's Memoir, upon the disputed question of prior possession: "With regard to the priority of their discoveries, the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, in the statement presented by them to the American minister during the negotiation of 1826, make the following observations: 'In reply to the allegations, on the part of the United States, that their claim to the country is strengthened and confirmed by the discovery of the sources of the Columbia, and by the exploration of the course of that river to the sea, by Lewis and Clark, in 1805-6, Great Britain affirms, and can distinctly prove, that, if not before, at least in the same and subsequent years, her Northwestern Trading Company had, by means of their agent, Mr. Thompson, already established their posts among