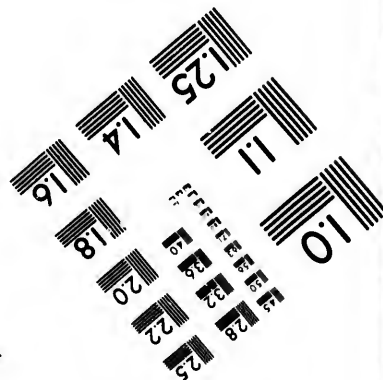
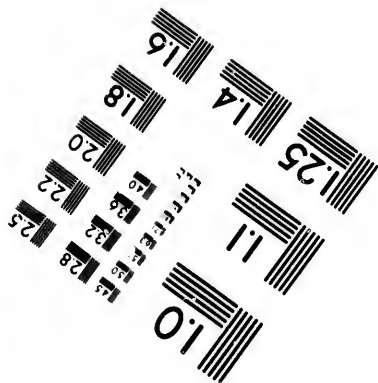
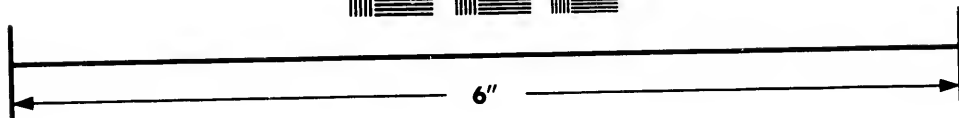
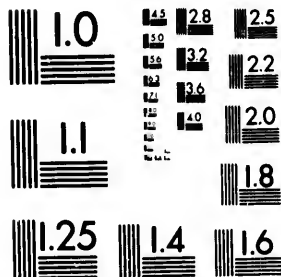


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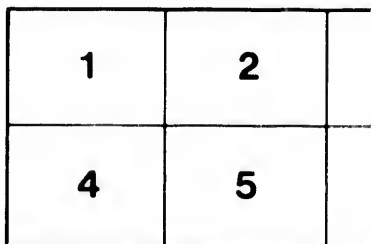
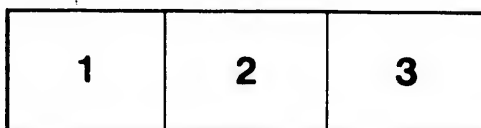
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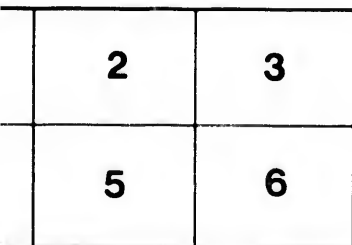
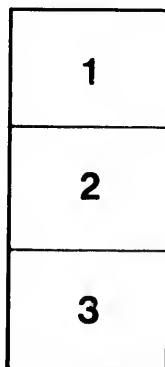
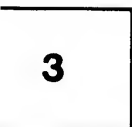
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THE SAN JUAN DISPUTE

A THRILLING PERIOD
IN U. S. HISTORY



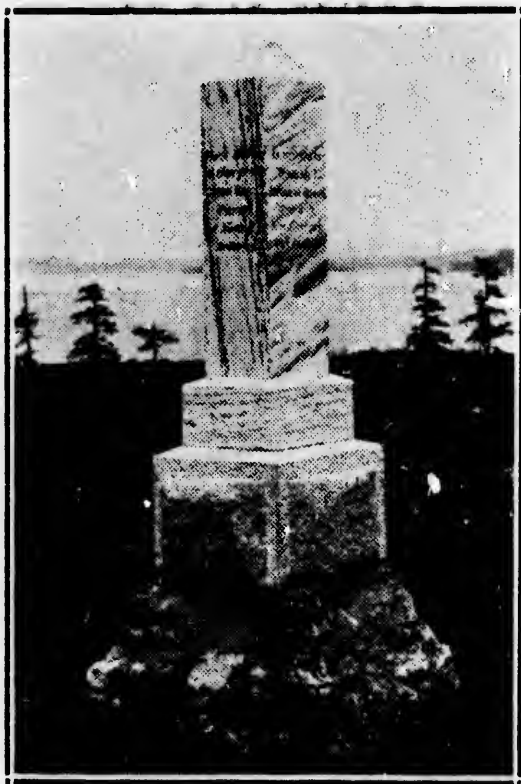
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MONUMENT, AMERICAN CAMP



—Photo, McCormick

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THE San Juan dispute forms an interesting chapter in the history of Northwest Washington, and is worthy of more than passing comment. The story of English camp, which is situated on Garrison Bay, on the northern end of San Juan Island, is full of romance and carries us back to the days of pioneer life.

Up to the date of the signing of the Webster-Ashburton treaty in 1842 which defined the boundary between the American and British possessions in the Northwest as the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, Great Britain had laid claim to all the country at least as far south as the Columbia river, and through the weakness of a vacillating policy at Washington and the privileges of a so-called "joint occupancy" she had been practically mistress of the vast territory that was then all called Oregon.

When, on the conclusion of the treaty of 1842, the great Hudson Bay Company were compelled to furl their banners, forsake their great stockaded posts, abandon their enormous fur trade and withdraw within the boundaries of British Columbia, it was sui-

lenly, wrathfully, revengefully they went. They were in no temper to yield one further foot of land that by any loophole of construction might be still claimed as British soil.

Now, although the treaty had defined the boundary line, it was in one detail most clumsily expressed. It provided that the line after following the forty-ninth parallel of latitude to the Gulf of Georgia, should then run along "the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's island" and through the middle of the Straits of Juan de Fuca to the Pacific ocean. But between the continent and Vancouver Island there is a group of islands, the most important of which is San Juan, and there are not one but three channels to the Straits of Fuca. One, the Haro channel, the largest, most naturally followed and the one undoubtedly intended by the treaty as was later definitely determined), ran to the west of San Juan. This the United States claimed as the boundary and San Juan as within her exclusive possession. The second, the Rosario channel, ran to the east of the archipelago, and Great Britain

claimed this as the boundary, which would give her San Juan, Lopez and all the other islands in the group. That she had no faith in the justice of this claim, however, was shown by her alternative proposition that the "treaty channel" was that called the President, a tortuous, obscure waterway, threading its way through the midst of the archipelago, but still leaving San Juan on the British side of the line.

In 1852, however, the young Washington territory had a legislature composed of men who thoroughly understood their own minds and were not apt to be slow or doubtful in claiming their rights, and this legislature calmly settled the matter so far as they were concerned — and perhaps partly as a spur to the easy-going gentlemen at Washington—by incorporating San Juan as part of Island county. There being no settlers on the island at the time, either British or American, no assessment was made until 1854, in which year the Island was placed by the legislature in the boundaries of the newly formed county of Whatcom. But the act was an assertion of American ownership

that quickly was taken advantage of and made real by resolute men.

Undoubtedly the British government was alarmed and irritated by this step, and determined to make a move if possible to bolster up its own fraudulent claim of ownership. As usual it looked to the Hudson Bay Company to act as its agent in carrying out this purpose, and never had it found that great advance guard of its interests more willing and eager. To baffle the Americans who had driven it from its rich holdings in Oregon was but the desire of its heart.

In December of 1853 the Hudson Bay Company's steamer Beaver left Victoria with thirteen hundred sheep, which it proceeded to land on San Juan with the herders, in charge of one of their agents named Charles J. Griffin, who long played an important part upon the island.

Early in 1854 the news of this came to the ears of I. N. Ebey, the United States collector of customs for Puget Sound, a man with wide-open eyes and a determined American. He cared nothing about the sheep, but he cared everything that the United States

should yield no color or shadow of right to the British claim through neglect or acquiescence.

In March, 1854, he took with him one Henry Webber, a man of his own caliber, and suddenly appeared on San Juan, where he sent for Griffin to come before him. When that gentleman appeared Ebey informed him that he was a United States customs collector, that the sheep upon the island seemed to have carelessly strayed around the custom house instead of through it, and that he had come to examine into the matter. Griffin demurred to his authority, protesting against his presence and requested his departure. Mr. Ebey reasserted his authority, ignored the protest and politely refused the request.

While the discussion was still in progress and was approaching an uncomfortable degree of heat new actors appeared upon the scene. The Hudson Bay Company had heard of Ebey's departure for San Juan, and now there swiftly approached the beach the company's steamer Otter, bearing his excellency, the British Governor Douglas, of Vancouver, and Vice Collector of Her Majesty's Customs Sangster. As a boat was low-

ered from the steamer and approached the beach, Ebey showed his quick wit by rushing off one of his men to plant an American flag which he had brought with him, on a near-by hill, thus making the Stars and Stripes the first of any nation to fly over the disputed territory. As the boat approaching carried a British flag which they had destined to that very honor, the sight failed to improve the temper of the occupants.

Vice Collector Sangster approached Mr. Ebey and curtly demanded what he was doing upon San Juan. Ebey replied that he was there to do his duty in a part of the customs district of Puget Sound, of which he was collector under the United States government. Sangster, in a towering rage, declared that he would not only arrest him, but all other Americans found on the island, and that he would even seize any American vessel found navigating any waters west of the Rosario channel. This bluff seeming to impress Mr. Ebey in not the slightest degree, and he refusing an invitation to go on board the Otter for the distinguished honor of a conference with Gov. Doug-

las, the Otter finally steamed away, leaving Mr. Sangster with a constable and a boat's crew to deal with the stubborn and recalcitrant American.

Ebey could not remain on the island indefinitely, but he saw that this was no time to withdraw any authority, so he appointed Henry Webber an inspector of customs, in spite of Sangster's threats to arrest Webber and take him to Victoria for trial. The next morning at sunrise Webber was awakened by Griffin, who solemnly informed him that he was under arrest. Mr. Webber laughed at him good-naturedly and demanded to see his warrant. Griffin not having such an article, retired but a few hours later the constable appeared with an amazing document which purported to be a warrant for Webber's arrest, drawn by Griffin himself, acting as a Hudson Bay Company magistrate.

The constable had his boat's crew with him and demanded Mr. Webber's immediate company. But by this time that gentleman's patience had evaporated, and he gave his visitors a rude shock by producing one of the cannon-like revolvers of those days and re-

marked that it contained six allopathic doses of lead, all of which he proposed to administer if his guests did not immediately remove themselves from his vicinity. The constable promptly stepped out of range and commanded his crew to seize the prisoner, which they as promptly declined to do. There was an attempt at further parley which Mr. Webber cut short with a further convincing demonstration with his artillery, and the arresting party retired, to appear later with a peace offering of a choice leg of mutton and a proposition for an indefinite armistice, which Webber graciously acceded to. A few months latter a sheriff of Whatcom county appeared upon the scene and seized and sold some thirty of the Hudson Bay Company's sheep for unpaid taxes under the assessment of that year, and thus for the time ended triumphantly the American assertion of authority over the island of San Juan.

Everything remained in this peaceful and satisfactory condition until 1859, except for frequent resignations and changes among the customs inspectors on

the island because of the loneliness of the post and the occasional Indian incursions, against which they were almost entirely unprotected.

In the winter of 1859, however, an incident absurdly trivial in its inception fanned the smoldering embers into a blaze which nearly lighted the torch of war between two great nations. In that year there were 29 actual American settlers on the island and the taxes to be collected by the county amounted to \$935. The island had grown to be considered indubitably American. A Hudson Bay officer named Dallas had roaming about the island a hog that he claimed to be of pure blood imported stock that had a fondness for rooting down the fences of the American settlers, who were wont to speak of him as an unspeakable, common, old razor-backed shoat. One of these settlers, in a fit of wrath over the loss of a promising collection of "garden truck," shot the brute. In a few days Dallas appeared upon the scene, and though Cutler agreed to pay for the animal killed, refused the offer and insisted that Cutler should be arrested and taken to Victoria for

trial. Cutler was no more moved by such a bold threat than Ebey and Webber had been and the warrant, if one existed, was never served; but the Americans, not only on San Juan, but in Victoria, were roused to the highest pitch of wrath at the thought of a United States citizen being arrested on American soil and taken to a British port to await a British trial.

They drew up a memorial reciting the facts of the attempted outrage and asked the protection of United states troops against its renewal or any attempt at a like prosecution on the part of the British authorities, and forwarded it to Gen. Harney, then in command of the Department of the Pacific. No better man could have been found to have had this matter on his hands at this time. To throw American troops into San Juan was a step from which a timid man would certainly have shrunk. It was sure to arouse the jealous antagonism of Great Britain, and British ships and troops in that immediate vicinity outnumbered all that the United States could possibly have opposed to them be-

yond all comparison. But Gen. Harney was not a man who was given to close calculation of odds where honor was at stake. The very year before he had been in Utah against the Mormans, and when just as winter was coming on he was surrounded by immensely superior forces and implored to withdraw before he should be cut to pieces, he had replied: "Gentlemen, I have orders to winter in Utah and I am going to winter there or in hell."

He responded promptly to the appeal of settlers by sending to San Juan with orders to stay there and hold the island a company of the Ninth United States Infantry, under the command of G. F. Pickett, whose temper at that time was no less courageous and ignorant of the hesitation of fear than when he led the immortal charge of his brigades to the Confederate high-water mark at Gettysburg.

Pickett, with his little command landed on San Juan in July and on the same day the British man-of-war Satellite appeared off the island, and landed Maj. De Courcy as a stipendary magistrate, a step that had clearly the object of

granting British processes against settlers who were wholly American. Griffin again came to the front and threatened Capt. Pickett himself with arrest under the guns of the British fleet, but this time met with a reception more vigorous than considerate. This final rebuff seems to have done Griffin, for hereafter we hear no more of his threats and bluster, but on the contrary his house seems to have become a hospitable rendezvous for years for British and American officers alike.

But more exciting days were at hand. Pickett's company of 60 men all told, had barely settled into their camp on the island before there appeared off the shore and broadside to their tents the British men-of-war Tribune of 31 guns and 325 men, Satellite of 21 guns and 125 men. Pickett sent a message to Steilacoom, where there was a United States post and the dilapidated old navy tub Massachusetts, with three guns fit for service and a speed of about six knots an hour.

Before she could more than get started for San Juan the British ship captains announced to Capt. Pickett that they would immediately proceed to land a force of

500 men. Pickett in the face of their numbers, the batteries of their ships and the knowledge that the British ship of the line *Ganges*, with 84 guns and 840 men, was on her way to join the British forces, returned the reply that he and his men would fight to the last drop of blood in them before a British soldier should set foot ashore on the island.

On the receipt of this astonishing defiance, Capt. Thornby of the *Tribune* sent a message to Pickett asking him to come on board his ship for a conference, but Pickett replied that such a meeting must take place in his tent or not at all. This almost arrogant exhibition of determination seems to have puzzled the British officers and made them wonder what could lie behind it, for they made no move, and on August 10 the *Massachusetts* lumbered into the harbor and landed Lieut. Col. Casey with nine companies of reduced ranks and eight 32-pound cannon.

Governor Douglas now issued a sounding proclamation formally claiming everything in the archipelago and surrounding waters for Great Britain. The situation was critical indeed, for even with

the reinforcements under Lieut. Col. Casey, the Americans were desperately outnumbered, and the British ships with their 68-pound guns could remain far outside the range of the American 32s and batter them to pieces or land their guns and have the little army of some 600 Americans at their mercy.

But Pickett's magnificent daring and "bluff" had saved the day. Both countries were awakened to the fatal proximity of another war, and when Gen. Harney answered Gov. Douglas' proclamation with a ringing letter that he had posted his soldiers on American soil to protect, and that British aggregation must cease, old Gen. Winfield Scott hastened to the scene to meet the British admiral Bayne, and in a few days the two old warriors reached the extraordinary agreement with reference to which this article began.

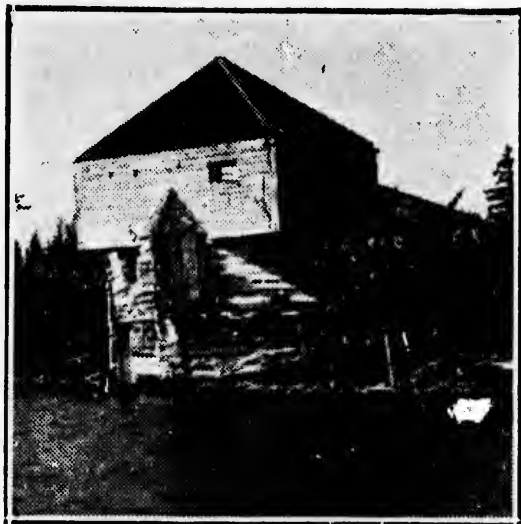
Near Roche Harbor 100 men of the British Royal Marine light infantry were landed, hoisted their flag, built their block house and comfortable quarters and settled down to await events. Not many miles south of them precisely 100

American soldiers built their barracks and fortifications under the folds of Old Glory.

The greatest civil war of history muttered, broke into the roar of a devastating whirlwind and died away; Prussia thrust Austria from the map of Northern Europe; Italy, after her centuries of political death, was gloriously resurrected; the most splendid, glittering, hollow empire in the world was forever shattered at Sedan, and a great republic rose from the blood-soaked ashes of the commune; and still those 100 officers and men, under the Stars and Stripes and the 100 under the cross of St. George held their lonely posts in that far-off island of the lonely Northwest.

And when in 1872 old Emperor William of Germany decided, as sole arbitrator, that the Haro Channel was the boundary and that all the islands were American, the Yankee bands played out of camp the British force, which left without a murmur of rancor or hostility.

The property on which English Camp is located was homesteaded by William Crook, and still re-



— Photo, McCormick
PRESENT APPEARANCE
OF OLD ENGLISH BLOCK HOUSE
ENGLISH CAMP

Journal Print, Friday Harbor





