

THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA

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THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA

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P R E F A C E

In the preparation of this thesis the writer has made a conscious effort to trace the events of interest and importance leading to the purchase of Alaska. Realizing the yet latent possibilities in this region, he has endeavored to arrange and interpret his materials so as to project the interest of others in the historical literature of this subject.

The writer wishes to express his sincere thanks to all those who may have assisted in any way in the preparation of this work, especially to Miss Campbell of the Document Department of the Oklahoma A. and M. College Library for her help in securing materials, and to Miss Duncan, his typist, who has been patient in giving final form to the thesis. To his wife, Vivian Taylor Frederick, he desires to make grateful acknowledgement for her encouragement and help.

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C. B. F.

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CHAPTER I

ALASKA EARLY EXPLORATIONS AND CLAIMS

The name Alaska is derived from the English corruption of the native word Al-ay-es-ka, probably meaning the great land or mainland.¹ The geographical bounds of the region are: the southern boundry is along the line of 130° following the crest of the mountains to the intersection of the 141st parallel and extending to Point Barrow in the Arctic Ocean on the north, and from east to west beginning at 141° longitude and extending to $172^{\circ}40'$. To the surprise of many, the gross area is 586,400 square miles, about three-fourths of which lies within the north temperate zone. Belonging to this area are about 1100 islands many of which are very small.²

Anyone who has not read on the climate, or traveled in Alaska will be surprised to learn of its mildness, especially in the southern part. The warm ocean currents flowing from the southwest modifies the temperature several degrees. Sitka in latitude $57^{\circ}3'$ is warmer than Portland, Maine, 14° farther south. Stormy weather usually appears in October of every year and becomes more severe during November and December. At Kotzebue Sound (on the Bering Strait in west-central Alaska), latitude 66° north and longitude 163° west, the climate is extremely variable. So great are the extremes that the thermom-

1. General Information Regarding the Territory of Alaska, (U. S. Department of Interior) Washington, June, 1931, pp. 1, 2.

2. Report of Secretary of Interior, 52 Cong., 1 sess., CXI, 463.

eter registers seventy-nine degrees (Fahrenheit) above zero in³ the summer and sixty-nine degrees below zero in the winter.

As if anticipating the importance of weather data to us, the Russian government established an observatory at Sitka in 1842 keeping hourly readings of the thermometer down to the transfer of the territory to the United States in 1867; the average winter temperature was given at 33^o, the same as that⁴ of Philadelphia.

To break down the ignorance and prejudice concerning the supposed bleakness of this region, General Rousseau in 1868 reported the climate at Sitka or New Archangel to be very pleasant and comparable to that of Washington. Many districts in central and southern Alaska are suitable for farming. Most of the soil is black and fertile, about one-third of which is covered with forests and the remainder with fine grass.⁵ Those who reside there may grow cabbage, turnips, potatoes, beets and other vegetables in their own gardens without difficulty, all of which are of excellent flavor. Berries such as strawberries and huckleberries are grown in abundance; cattle and poultry raising are carried on in many places with success.⁶

Alaska having an interior, a Pacific, and an Arctic region is really three countries in one. The valley of the Yukon

3. Report of House Committee, No. 37, 40 Cong., 2 sess., pp. 1-27.

4. House Exec. Doc. No. 177, 40 Cong., 2 sess., Washington, 1867-68, XIII, 115.

5. Report of House Committee, op. cit., pp. 1-27.

6. House Exec. Doc. No. 125, 40 Cong., 2 sess., CXI, 8; Report of Secretary of Interior, op. cit., p. 463-466.

is in the central region of this territory.⁷ In the summer the temperatures of the valley reach 100° or above while in winter they drop as far as 50° to 70° below zero.⁸ At Kodiak (on Kodiak Island located off the southwestern coast) the summers are cooler than those of New England and the winters warmer than those of southern Pennsylvania.

One may view some of the most beautiful scenery in the world as he travels along the passage from Victoria to Sitka, a distance of 840 miles. The mountains which are covered with forests rise almost perpendicularly from the waters edge to a height of 1000 to 3000 feet. Water gushing from the top of these mountains form magnificent falls.⁹

Without serious reflection one today would not think that 200 years ago this wonderland was unknown as far as civilized people were concerned and its discovery, which was almost accidental, was motivated at first by curiosity.

Expansion toward the Pacific began as early as 1582 when a band of Russian Cossacks crossed the Urals and captured Sibir on the Irthysh River. From this conquest came not only the name of the great territory in eastern Russia but the incentive to move to the Pacific coast. In a little over fifty years (1636) her intrepid trail-blazers were rewarded when the largest of the oceans, the turbulent Pacific lay at their feet

7. House Exec. Doc. No. 125, 40 Cong., 2 sess., CXI, 8;
Report of Secretary of Interior, op. cit., p. 463-466.

8. Report of Secretary of Interior, op. cit., pp. 463-466.

9. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 8.

and a strange civilization gazed with awe at their presence. There they established a number of depots after conquering the alien territory. Presently the depots were enlarged into cities, to which came woewods or governmental officials from Moscow. This antiquated form of government was used in Siberia until 1708 when Peter the Great reorganized it on the basis of the newer ideas, prevalent in the more modern European States.¹⁰

These people were bold fur hunters who sent back strange stories about a land to the Far East. Upon learning of these, Peter the Great gave instructions for two vessels to be built on the coast of Kamchatka and to find out if the land of Asia was contiguous with that of America. These orders were written with his own hand, but he was not to live to see them carried to completion; however, his faithful queen endeavored to have his wishes fulfilled. She secured Vitus Behring, a Dane, and sent him out February 5, 1725 to cross Siberia, Northern Asia, and Okhotsk to the coast of Kamchatka. After reaching his destination on Kamchatka the first exploratory voyage was begun July 20, 1728. Steering to the northeast he came to a large island on St. Lawrence day, to which he gave the name of the saint. Keeping near the Asiatic coast Behring reached as far north as $67^{\circ}30'$ and turned back satisfied that Asia and North America did not touch.¹¹

A second voyage was begun July 4, 1741 by Behring and

10. F. A. Golder, Russian Expansion on the Pacific, Cleveland, Ohio, 1914, pp. 17-31.

11. House Exec. Doc. No. 177, 40 Cong., 2 sess., p. 126; Congressional Record, 40 Cong., 2 sess., p. 138.

Tchirikoff, who set sail from Avatcha in two ships. After a stormy voyage of fourteen days in which the two leaders were separated, land was sighted by the former off the American coast at $58^{\circ}28'$ north latitude and 236° west longitude, and by the latter (July 31, 1741) at 56° north latitude and 245° west longitude. Somewhat anxious to obtain information on this new discovery, Tchirikoff sent a number of his men to explore the coast and to make observations, but for some reason they never returned. As to the cause of their disappearance no definite information is possessed, but the loss was such a shock to the bold commander that he and the remaining part of his crew, when they were unable to locate their colleagues, immediately set sail for Kamchatka.

Behring, a few days after sighting new land, anchored and undertook to gain knowledge of the surrounding region. Two of the capes, St. Elias and Hermogenes, which extended into the sea, were named by him after they were partly explored. A group of islands, which he discovered, was called Taumanoi or Foggy Islands. The native life and the new findings so interested the navigator that he remained late in the season wandering in and out among the islands until winter was almost at hand. Late in September, 1741 he decided to return to Kamchatka but became confused on October 30 by what he thought was the most northern part of the Kurile Islands. When the mistake was discovered, he decided to turn back. This change of course proved impossible for the stormy season was at hand. Sailing was difficult and soon he found himself and his vessel

hurled upon an island. Here Behring and many of his crew died of scurvy and fatigue during the dreadful winter of 1741-42. When spring came, the remaining few constructed a small vessel and returned to Avatcha, where they arrived in August, 1742.¹²

For the next few years little advancement was made in improving the few settlements already established. Ere long, however, the interest of hunters and adventurers began creating a movement for incorporation. A great hunting trip to the Aleutian Islands made in 1745 by Nevedchikoff proved very profitable and at least one expedition was made each year thereafter by the Siberian merchants.¹³ In this way much of northwestern America was discovered in a feverish search to find a strait through the projection of Asia. After the explorers met disappointment repeatedly in the central part of this region, many of them directed their search farther and farther northward.

Meanwhile the news of the Russian explorers became patent. On no ears did it strike a more vital blow than it did on those of the Spanish sovereign. From the time of Charles V this land had been considered the personal property of the Spanish monarch. For him to lose possession of it, the prestige that had been so carefully developed around him in western Europe would meet a fatal blow. Consequently the Spanish exerted themselves to extend their claims because the Russians were push-

12. American State Papers, Foreign Relations, 18 Cong., 2 sess., 454; Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Works of Bancroft, XXVII 29, 30.

13. Bancroft, Op. cit., XXVII, 29, 30.

ing down from the north; however, "no Strait Anain was found."

None of the things for which the explorers were searching between 40° and 60° north latitude was found except a vast fur trade. It was this lucrative business which ultimately became the enticing force and the motivating power that prompted many other explorations and claims. European navigators between 1492 and 1540 explored about 30,000 miles of the coast line of North and South America. This extended from the coast of Labrador (60° north latitude), around the southern tip of South America to 40° north latitude on the Pacific coast. In 1497 Henry VII of England sent the Cabots westward and before they returned they had explored between 50° and 67°30' north latitude. Francis I of France followed the exploratory movement by dispatching Jacques Cartier who made three voyages between 1534 and 1541 in search of a passage to the South Sea and Spice Islands.

Not only was the West searched for the alluring passage to the East but at the suggestion of Sebastin Cabot in 1553, England sent three vessels under Sir Hugh Willoughby in search of a northeast passage to China. These entered the White Sea but the English commander and two of the ships were lost; however, through the skill of William Chancellor one of the ships was saved. As soon as Chancellor learned he was on Russian soil the tales concerning the ferocity of Ivan IV, "the terrible" were sufficient to induce him to change his mission

14. Bancroft, op. cit., XXVII, 7-13.

15. Ibid.

from one of exploration to one involving commercial relations with England. When the news concerning the arrival of the Englishmen was carried to the tsar he ordered them to Moscow. No better news than a desire for trade could have fallen upon more attentive ears than those of the Russian monarch, because for years (since 1221) such commercial relationship had been restricted by the Hanseatic League. This trading corporation had a strict monopoly on all trade in the Baltic region, therefore, an opportunity to break its strangle hold was not looked upon lightly. Thus trade relations were established in 1556 between England and Russia.¹⁶

Soon the English "sea dogs" were everywhere challenging the maritime power of other nations, especially that of Spain. Sir Francis Drake, returning from looting the treasure ships of Philip, landed on the California coast in 1579 trying to find a strait through to the Atlantic Ocean. In his search he perhaps reached as far north as 43rd parallel of latitude giving England a claim to this coast.¹⁷

Many years passed before these claims were further established by Captain Cook who left England in 1776 commanding the ship Resolution with instructions to explore the northern Pacific coast in search of a strait leading through to the Atlantic Ocean. Since England had offered £20,000 to the officers and crew who would discover a passage to the Atlantic

16. Bancroft, op. cit., XXXIII, 8.

17. Ibid., XXVII, 18-24.

Ocean north of 52° considerable energy was expended by the crew in an effort to obtain the reward. As a result Cook explored most of the coast and secured a large quantity of furs from the Indians. Thoroughly cognizant of their value when delivered in Siberia or China, the natives were well treated with a view of further transactions. This voyage, from the American and English view point, marked the genesis of the fur trade.¹⁸ Thus far practically all the exploratory work had been done in the coast regions of North America. But with the advent of a new colonial policy in England at the close of the French and Indian war the interior of the continent came before the imperialists for further exploration. As a sequel to the change in policy the northwest territory was invaded under the leadership of Samuel Hearne. Hearne and his men descended the Coppermine River in 1770, and Mackenzie followed in 1789 when he explored the Peace and Fraser Rivers to the Pacific Ocean (in latitude 53).¹⁹

Anticipating the magnitude of the fur industry upon the American continent, the Hudson Bay Company was organized in 1670 for the purpose of capitalizing on the business in the north and northwest. To control a distinct advantage it was necessary for England to establish claims and to build forts. These she continued to occupy intermittently, as they were disputed by France down to 1763, when the latter was elimin-

18. Bancroft, op. cit., XXVII, pp. 168-172.

19. Ibid., p. 28.

20
ated.

Now all active opposition was gone and England was free to exploit the natives as she pleased. Each year thousands and thousands of furs were taken from them to augment the Chinese trade. An otter skin which was worth thirty dollars in China could be bought from an Indian for a few cents worth of trinkets. Between 1785-87 there were 5,800 sea otter skins sold in the Orient at an average price of thirty dollars each, and from 1799 to 1802, 48,500 similar skins, valued at many thousands of dollars were shipped to foreign markets. ²¹ Realizing ere long others would be engaged in these markets, England dispatched George Vancouver and Lieutenant W. R. Broughton in command of the sloop Discovery, carrying twenty guns and one hundred men and the Chatham with ten guns and forty-five men from Falmouth, April 1, 1791 with instructions to proceed to the north Pacific for the purpose of making a thorough survey of the Sandwich Islands, the northwest coast of America, and, ²² if possible find a passage to the Atlantic.

For some time Spain had been indifferent to the English activities in the Pacific northwest but with the coming of the new Viceroy Revilla Gigedo in the late 1780's an active policy was adopted. Men and ships were dispatched to this region for the purpose of reasserting her claims and curbing the extensive ambitions of England. A clash between these two powers

20. Bancroft, op. cit., XXVII, pp. 18-28.

21. Ibid., p. 373.

22. Ibid., p. 274.

was inevitable. It came when England attempted to fortify Nootka Sound. After much controversy Spain was forced to relinquish many of its claims to the north Pacific region in the convention of November 22, 1790.²³

Although the interest of the Spanish in the Pacific had subsided in a marked degree her officials still held, by virtue of discovery, a decided advantage over any other nation. After Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama in 1513 to discover the South Sea, there were continued efforts to explore the coast as far north as the 44th parallel of latitude. Cortez had touched in the 1520's upon the Pacific coast in three places which confirmed the Spanish northward trend. Ulloa in 1539 gave definite knowledge concerning the Gulf of California, pushing up the coast to Cedras Islands. Four years later Cabrillo sailed as far north as the 44th parallel of latitude and in 1550 Clarcon explored the mouth of the Colorado River.

As Spain had access to great wealth in other regions and was at war a great part of the time her interest in the northwest coast was diverted for over two centuries. However, in 1774 her interest was revived when Perez, one of her navigators in Mexico (Monterey), was given instructions to go as far north as 60° and take possession of the coastland. Due to a shortage of supplies and inclement weather he fell short of his mission for after reaching 55 parallel of latitude he

23. Ibid., pp. 184-373; Joseph Schafer, A History of the Pacific Northwest, New York, 1928, pp. 1-5.

turned southward. To him is given the credit for exploring the northwest coast. While doing this work he found the Indians entirely friendly and eager to carry on trade. Spanish officials still not satisfied with former accomplishments sent, three years later, Bruno Heceta with two vessels, the Santiago and Senora, with plans to explore as far north as 65° of latitude. Sometime after their embarkation the two ships became separated. The Santiago for some reason did not long continue her northern journey but the smaller craft, Senora, which was only thirty-six feet long, twelve feet wide and eight feet deep, sailed forward on its mission. Eventually, after reaching the approximate location of Perez, his scant supplies forced his brave band to give up the northern trek. Other attempts of Spain to explore and claim the coastal region north of 60° proved futile for the present, but to the region south unquestionably she of all European states possessed the best claims.

Although the French had lost their possessions in North America by the Paris treaty (1763), they were not to be out done by the Spanish and English in the mad race for the fur trade and claims in the Pacific northwest. As early as 1743 they had manifested a definite interest in the fur trade of the upper Missouri River and the Yellowstone region. Verendryes, one of their traders and explorers, had gone as far west as what is now Montana by the middle of the eighteenth

24. Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 12-227.

century. Some years later (in 1785), it therefore did not seem strange and unusual when France sent out another trusted servant, La Perouse, to find an interoceanic passage, make scientific observations and obtain information relative to the fur trade of the Pacific northwest. ²⁵ True to his instructions he fulfilled his mission, but on his return voyage he was shipwrecked. The result of this exploration was not known until some years later when his vessel and some of his records were found upon an island.

Thus we find France, Spain, and England all smitten by the same bug of imperialistic ambitions. Their efforts, however, were somewhat restricted after the Nootka Sound convention of October 28, 1790, for, by it, no European country could claim exclusive right to the northwest coast beyond the established Spanish settlements. Just where the northernmost one was, was indeed a question, but her claims from exploration extended as far north as 60°. ²⁶

In the years between 1790 and 1794 the English, Spanish, French and Americans were all busily engaged in exploration or fur trading enterprises focusing on the land north of Nootka Sounds. At least twenty-eight vessels visited this region in the year of 1792, five of which came to explore and the remainder for commercial purposes. ²⁷

25. Bancroft, op. cit., p. 26.

26. American State Papers, op. cit., p. 445.

27. Bancroft, op. cit. p. 259.

The United States first became interested in this district in a major way on the disclosure of the reports given in 1786 by John Ledyard, a corporal on Cook's flag ship. This imaginative fellow in addition to startling public statements, conferred with Thomas Jefferson in regard to the commercial value of the Pacific Northwest and the importance of the Chinese trade. ²⁸ The stimuli set in motion in this way, plus the log of Captain Cook, soon registered heavily upon the trade membrane of the Boston merchants. In imagination they could see themselves as rich as Croesus if it could be monopolized.

Their plan in part was placed in motion on October 1, 1788 when Captain Gray and John Kendrick were put in command of two vessels, the Columbia and Lady Washington, and dispatched with all possible haste to the Pacific. The journey around Cape Horn was long and perilous, but after undergoing many hardships, late in September, 1789, both vessels were anchored in Nootka Sounds. Here, much to their chagrin, the Americans found the English under Captains Meares and Douglas. After extending to the English officers the courtesies of American sailors Captain Gray explored up the coast as far as 55° 43' and was only prevented from going farther by a severe storm. Upon his return to Nootka, he found Martinez, the Spanish Commander, had made the English prisoners. During the exchange between the Spanish and the English, Captain Gray decided to take his valuable cargo to China. The Columbia

28. Schafer, op. cit., p. 35.

reached Canton in December and was soon loaded with its Chinese cargo. It now proceeded around the world, arriving at Boston in August, 1790.²⁹ This journey proved so profitable that the Boston merchants did not permit Gray to linger long in the city. A few weeks later on, September 28, 1790, once again he was enroute to the Pacific coast. After arriving north of Puget Sounds in June, 1791 he proceeded to explore the many inlets between 54° and 56° north latitude. It was perhaps on the discoveries of this expedition that the United States could base her claims later to this region.³⁰ The winter of 1791-92 was spent at Clayoquot, where Gray constructed a new sloop, the Adventure, and laid plans for his spring movements. Captain Gray in the spring of 1792 met Vancouver just below Cape Flattery and gave the Englishman an account of his past discoveries. Much of the coast was traversed and on May 7 a port was discovered, and entered, in latitude 46°58' called at first, "Bulfinch Harbor" but later was changed to Gray Harbor, which name it has retained. While here the Americans were attacked by the Indians. A lively battle ensued, the Americans killing a number of the natives. This place had been discovered in 1775 by Entrada de Heceta who named its points San Roque and Frondso, but he was unable to enter the harbor. Crossing the bar, going up the river for about ten miles Gray dropped anchor, making further investiga-

29. Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 206-212.

30. Ibid., p. 251.

tions and on the fourteenth of May, 1792 the ship went some fifteen miles farther. It had taken the wrong channel and was forced to stop because of the shoals. This was the Columbia River and was named after the first vessel ever to enter it. It had been seen earlier in the year by Gray and by Vancouver, but both were driven away by the mighty reflux and by storms.

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By now many Americans were in the Pacific Northwest, trading, exploring, and making treaties with the Indians. Although there was never any attempt to establish our claims to the Alaskan region, Captain Kendrick, during his brief stay in the northern Pacific, bought some of the land from two native chiefs, Maquinna and Wicananish. The United States by virtue of exploration certainly had a valid claim to what was later the Oregon Territory. England disputed with the United States our claim to the northwest coast between 45° and 51° north latitude, claiming this part was still open to settlement, that Captain Gray was not the first to reach and explore the Columbia River, but was preceded by Captain Cook. We could further substantiate our claims upon the concessions made by Spain in her treaty of Washington (1819) which gave us the claims she possessed between 42° and 60°. When Spain made her relinquishments in 1819 another factor of serious proportions was bothering the officials of England, Russia, and the United States; namely, a monopoly of the fur trade of

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31. Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 250-260.

32. American State Papers, op. cit., p. 555.

the Pacific Northwest. Russia as early as 1790 had conceded to Spain exclusive jurisdiction to the Pacific region south of 61° only to regret it a few years later when some of her capitalists became interested in exploiting the fur industry of Alaska and the region south. By gradual steps under the leadership of Tsar Paul, the Russian-American Company was chartered in 1799.³³ Associated in this company were many Russian noblemen in addition to the Empress and the Grand Duke Tsessarevitsh.³⁴ To this company exclusive commercial privileges were given between 55° and the Behring Strait. This territorial claim of course trespassed on soil already ceded to Spain but since the provisions of the charter were not patent and the French Revolution kept western Europe occupied for the next two decades, Russia to a large degree dominated the coastal trade. For many years Chilikoff, who directed its activities in America, was very unscrupulous in dealing with the natives.³⁵ As many as twenty ships plus the efforts of a hundred imported Russian officials and thousands of natives were engaged in collecting and transporting furs from the Alaskan coast to the Chinese, the Japanese, and the home markets. To protect those who were engaged in this business many military posts and forts were established throughout the region.³⁶

33. Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 375-510.

34. House Exec. Doc. op. cit., p. 111.

35. American State Papers, op cit., p. 454.

36. Ibid.

The American traders and public officials became alarmed in 1821 when Tsar Alexander I issued a Ukase giving the company exclusive rights as far south as the 151st parallel and excluding foreigners from the sea for a number of miles.³⁷

This issue was so serious that both England and the United States joined hands to restrain the southern expansion. Russia at first remained adamant but after the Monroe Doctrine was issued in 1823 negotiations were boosted that culminated in the treaty of St. Petersburg (1824) that delimited her southern claims to 54°40'.³⁸

37. Carl Russel Fish, American Diplomacy, New York, 1923, p. 209.

38. William M. Malloy, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols, and Agreements Between the United States and Other Powers, 1776-1911, II, pp. 1513-1514.

CHAPTER II

EVENTS AND TREATIES LEADING TO THE FINAL NEGOTIATIONS

By the treaty of Ghent the War of 1812 was brought to a close, however, as usual England failed to abide by all of its stipulations. According to the first article she was to pay for slaves and property which were carried off during the war. Serious trouble was about to develop over the settlement of the issues when Russia came forward and offered her services as an arbitrator between the two powers. The rendering of a favorable decision to the United States had much to do with the bringing about of a mutual understanding between the American nation and Russia.¹

With the restoration of Astoria and the Oregon country in 1818 our fishing and fur trade in the Pacific Northwest soon assumed the magnitude that it had enjoyed before the war. As the post-war waves of prosperity and settlers moved westward it became necessary by 1824 for us to make an agreement with Russia defining our rights and relationships in this region. Consequently a convention was concluded April 17, 1824 at St. Petersburg by Henry Middleton, our minister to Russia, and Le Comte Charles de Nesselrode and Pierre de Poletica of Russia which outlined our activities on the Pacific coast.²

It was agreed that our navigation and fishing interest

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1. American State Papers - For. Rel. 18 Cong., 2 sess., V, 214.
 2. Wm. M. Malloy, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols, and Agreements Between the U. S. and Other Powers, 1776-1911, II, 1513-1514, Washington, 1910.

upon the coast was not to be restrained; that the citizens of the United States were not to intrude upon the established settlements of Russia without the permission of the governor or commander; that the subjects of Russia were not to resort to United States establishments without our consent; that we would not make any settlements upon the coast or any of the adjacent islands north of 54°40' north latitude; that Russia would confine her claims north of the above named limits; and that firearms should not be sold to the natives; the harbors, seas, gulfs, and creeks upon the coast were to be frequented reciprocally for a period of ten years, for the purpose of fishing and trading with the natives.

Prior to the negotiation of this treaty the expansion policy of Russia appeared as a real menace in the Oregon country. Traders, trappers and merchants, during the first two decades of the century, traveling under the flag of the czar moved as far south as central California. From their aggressive policy many Americans became fearful of the idea of a Russian colony in the rear. They imagined that from it ideas would find their way into the states that would tend to corrupt the American interpretation of liberty and independence. Likewise were they fearful that the dominant rulers of Europe might try to establish the principles of the Quadruple Alliance to the Spanish holdings in the New World. It was, therefore, somewhat easy for George Canning, Secretary

3. Wm. M. Malloy, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols, and Agreements Between the U. S. and Other Powers, 1776-1911, II, 1513-1514, Washington, 1910.

of Foreign Affairs in England to come to terms by Secretary of State Adams that led to the Monroe Doctrine.⁴

When Richard Rush, our minister to England, proposed to Mr. Canning on December 22, 1823 that the English limit their activities between the 51° and 55° of north latitude, he did not object to the southern limitation but did object to the northern one. The United States proposed to make a joint agreement with England and Russia to the effect that we would make no attempt to settle north of 51° and England would not settle south of it, and that Russia would make no effort to settle south of 55°.⁵

Our government contended that it had exclusive claim by discovery, occupation and purchase to all the Pacific coast between the 42nd and 51st parallels of north latitude; based on the treaty with Spain in 1819. Richard Rush went so far as to say that he could prove the "true sovereignty over the whole of that coast from the 42° to 60° of north latitude is now vested in the United States."⁶

On January 22, 1823 John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, outlined our claims to the Oregon territory in no uncertain terms. The right of the United States from the 42nd to 49th parallels of north latitude on the Pacific Ocean we consider unquestionable, he asserted, first on the acquisition by the Washington treaty of February 22, 1819 of all the

4. American State Papers, op. cit., p. 437.

5. Ibid. p. 463.

6. Ibid. p. 471.

rights of Spain, second, by the discovery of the Columbia River by Robert Gray, third, by the Lewis and Clark expedition, and fourth, by settlement of Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia in 1812.⁷ To these assertions Mr. Canning countered by informing Richard Rush on January 19, 1824 that England must insist on her claims from the 45° to 61° of north latitude.⁸

Because of commercial ambitions which were held by the Americans dispute between England and Russia over an important island split by the 55° parallel, caused much anxiety among our merchants. Russia wanted to extend her boundary as far south as 54° 41' in order to include all of the island, and England wanted to extend hers to 56° so that it would be included in her boundary. This caused Russia to urge the closing of the open trade in the northwest. To this we would not agree and were able to get a new treaty in 1832, two years before the one made in 1824 expired.⁹

In the treaty of "Commerce and Navigation," concluded December 18, 1832 at St. Petersburg, open trade was assured and reciprocal liberty of commerce and navigation was guaranteed to all the most favored nations alike. Illicit trade and discriminating charges were forbidden, all kinds of merchandise and articles of commerce which could be lawfully imported in a country in its own vessels, could also

7. American State Papers, op. cit. p. 437.

8. Ibid., p. 471.

9. Ibid., p. 461.

be imported in vessels of other nations, meeting the conditions of this treaty, especially the United States and Russia. Importation duties into the United States and Russia on manufactured articles were to be no higher than the duties payable on like articles being produced or manufactured in foreign countries. The agreements as set forth in Articles II, III, IV, V, and VI were not applicable to the coastwise navigation of the two countries. Consuls, vice-consuls and agents were to be appointed to sit as judges and arbitrators in settling disputes which might arise between captains and crews of vessels belonging to the nation whose interest they represented. Power was delegated to the local authorities of the two nations to assist the consuls in arresting deserters, who must be tried and sent back to their respective countries within four months. Favours granted to other nations should be common to Russia and the United States. 10

This treaty met our demands and needs until 1854 when the Crimean War gave rise to new problems, not that we were directly involved, but indirectly interested. Consequently a new convention, which was concluded July 22, 1854 at Washington by W. L. Marcy of the United States and Edourd Stoeckl of Russia, was an effort to define free goods, free ships, and neutral vessels. Goods belonging to citizens of a power or states at war were free from capture when on board a neutral ship, unless they were articles of war. Property of neutrals on board an enemy vessel was not subject to confisca-

10. Wm. H. Malloy, op. cit., II, 1515-1518.

tion unless found to be contraband of war. Other powers desiring to enjoy the privileges of this convention might do so by making a formal declaration to abide by its stipulations.¹¹

As early as 1847, shortly after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Russia expressed a willingness to part with its American possessions. It was her sincere wish to thwart England's plans in the north Pacific. A special treaty with Spain early in the century had permitted an extension of Russian trade southward into California. The Russian-American Company had located a trading post at Bodega just north of where San Francisco now stands. Since the returns from the enterprise were not as much as were expected, Admiral Wrangel was sent to examine the country and report on its value. So discouraging were the results of this investigation that the Russian stockholders sold their possessions to private parties for a meager sum, Sutter of California fame being one of the principal purchasers.¹² The Russian-American Company had been chartered by the imperial government and renewed from time to time but now the company was asking for greater advantages and decided not to accept a renewal unless its requests were granted. What was Russia to do with its American possessions? Certainly it had no desire to see them fall into the hands of England, a

11. Wm. M. Malloy, *op. cit.*, II, 1515-1518.

12. House Exec. Doc. No. 177, 40 Cong., 2 sess., Washington, 1867-68, XIII, 46.

hostile nation.

During the Crimean War, P. S. Kostromitinov, the agent of the Russian American Company, devised a fictitious sale of Russian-American Company to the United States fearing England's attack and capture of their possessions. Stoeckl, the Russian minister, conferred with Marcy, the Secretary of State, and Senator Gwin about making the transaction public but they advised against it, knowing England would be sure to see through the whole thing. A rumor was spread by Dr. Cotman, who was attached to the Russian legation at Washington, that his Government was bankrupt and must sell Alaska to get funds. The American newspapers were quick to play up the idea. This lead Marcy and Gwin to think there was some truth in the story and they approached Stoeckl on the matter who assured them it was false. Due to the publicity that was given by the American newspapers on the possibility of the purchase, the Hudson Bay Company made an agreement with the Russian-American Company to respect each others rights on the Pacific.¹⁴ In the meantime Stoeckl was urged to secure the neutrality of the United States and cultivate the friendship already existing.

To acquire new territory at this time was looked upon as a grave thing because of the slavery question. While European nations were entering into the field of imperial-

13. Bancroft, op. cit., p. 591.

14. Frank A. Golder, "The Purchase of Alaska," American History Review (1920), XXV, 411-12.

istic greed, the leading American nation was having serious domestic troubles. The North and South were grappling at each others congressional throats endeavoring to get the strangle scissors on the voting power to insure favorable laws to the victor. So fierce was this combat that all the forces were marshalled by the titans to determine the fate of the Mexican cession. Out of this furor came the Compromise of 1850 which was viewed by many of the leaders as the omega of the nauseating trouble; however, this was not the case. Only more fuel was dumped upon the smouldering embers of sectional hatred to spue and smoke until the spark of secession ignited the gases and the conflagration spread throughout the Union. With the disposal of the territory acquired from Mexico, the expansionists made little more effort until just before the Civil War when the Senators from California asked for greater concessions on the Pacific. Senator Gwin had already discussed with the Russian minister the possibility of our buying Alaska, and the Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Appleton, also had communicated with him on the same subject. As a result of their overtures an unofficial offer of \$5,000,000 was made by Senator Gwin. At about the same time the proffer was called to the attention of President Buchanan (December, 1859), who said he thought the acquisition would be profitable to the United States and he would confer with his cabinet and the influential members of Congress.

This offer was apparently somewhat in keeping with the

15. House, Exec. Doc., op. cit. p. 46.

Russo-American conversations, for two years previously the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of Tzar Alexander II, urged the transfer of the Russian-American possessions to the United States, because of their small value to Russia, the great demand for money and the need of the territory by the United States to round out its holdings on the Pacific.¹⁶

Stoeckl in a report to Constantine had explained the increased interest of the Americans in this region and insisted that something be done to avoid a diplomatic controversy later. This caused Constantine to confer with Gorchakov on the possible transferring of the possessions to the United States. In addition, the talk of a Mormon migration led by Brigham Young to this region caused Stoeckl some anxiety. Out of this phase came an inquiry to President Buchanan as to whether they were going into the far west as colonists or conquerors. To this inquiry President Buchanan replied by saying that it mattered little to him just so he got rid of them.¹⁷

Not entirely satisfied in the light of information given to this time on the conditions on the Pacific region, Gorchakov called for a special report to determine the exact financial status and when it was made he decided to renew the negotiations. Meantime, the President's term had expired and the Civil War had begun. During this conflict the North was too busy trying to save the Union to think of acquiring new territory; however, events transpired to pave

16. Frank A. Golder, op. cit., p. 413.

17. Ibid., pp. 413-14.

the way for the purchase later. Russia, too, was having serious troubles at this time. In Poland an insurrection broke out in 1862 against the dictatorial policy of the czar. To put down the trouble he had the police to make a number of arrests. As had been the custom since the Congress of Vienna, the governing of Poland was looked upon as a personal matter by the czar. However, England and France looked upon the trouble as an international question, but Russia failed to accept this view.¹⁸ When war seemed inevitable, Grand-Duke Constantine, brother of the czar, instructed Admiral Papov to take charge of the Pacific Fleet and take it to a safe harbor with the view of preying upon the commerce of the enemy in case of war. Krebbe, technical advisor to the Emperor, thought the Russian navy too weak to fight England and France, but it must not be blockaded. Captain Lisovskii, who was promoted to the rank of rear-admiral, was put in charge of the Atlantic squadron with instructions to prey upon the commerce of the enemy in event of war.

Lisovskii landed in New York, September, 1863 and Papov in San Francisco in October of the same year. Their coming was a surprise to the Americans and had nothing to do with the affairs in this country at all.¹⁹ In the banquets and entertainments which were given in their behalf, all questions relative to the European troubles were studiously avoided.

18. Frank A. Golder, "The Russian Fleets and the Civil War," American History Review, XX, (1920) pp. 801-802.

19. Ibid., p. 805.

Consequently, many of the American people believed the
 Russians came for the sole benefit of our nation.²⁰

In view of the troubled conditions in Europe, we were
 rendering a distinct service to Russia by protecting her navy
 during this crisis, perhaps saving her from a war with
 England.²¹

To further strengthen the ties of friendship, President
 Lincoln, through the Secretary of State, William H. Seward,
 extended an invitation to the Emperor of Russia to send the
 Archduke Constantine upon a visit to this country, intimating
 an opinion that such a visit would be "beneficial to the United
 States and by no means unprofitable to Russia."²²

With the successful conclusion of the Civil War and the
 expansion of trade, there came urgent requests from many sec-
 tions for greater commercial concessions. To demonstrate this
 idea was true, the territorial legislature of Washington
 passed a resolution January, 1866, asking the United States
 to aid in establishing satisfactory conditions for those who
 were engaged in the fishing industry on the northwest coast,
 and directed Edward Eldridge, Speaker of the House, and Harvey
 K. Hines, President of the Council, to transmit the resolu-
 tion to the President of the United States.²³

20. Frank A. Golder, "The Russian Fleets and the Civil War,"
American History Review, XX, (1920) p. 308.

21. Ibid., p. 312.

22. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 4; Diplomatic Correspondence,
 40 Cong., 2 sess., pp. 390-391.

23. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 5.

Soon their prayers were to be graciously answered in the efforts and achievements of the Secretary of State, Honorable William H. Seward, who by training and nature was an expansionist and a vociferous propounder of the "Manifest Destiny Theory." The mantle of Lewis Cass and Thomas Hart Benton could not have fallen on a better disciple. Writing in 1846 he asserted that: "Our population is destined to roll its resistless waves to the icy barriers of the north and to encounter oriental civilization on the shores of the Pacific."²⁴

Speaking at St. Paul in the campaign of 1860 he said:

Standing here and looking far off into the Northwest, I see the Russian busily occupies himself in establishing seaports and towns and fortifications, on the verge of this continent, as outposts of St. Petersburg, and all I can say, go on and build your outposts all along the coast even up to the Arctic Ocean. They will become the outposts of my own country.²⁵

The aggressive, imperialistic policy of England and the humiliation Russia had suffered in the Crimean War no doubt had much to do with the reversing of the phobia which had existed for a number of years in England toward Russia. England no longer feared the "great bear" of the East that walked upright like a man. The magnificent army which was so evident at the Congress in Vienna was now demoralized and Russia lived day by day in constant fear of English ambitions. Baron Stoeckl feared the hostility of England and thought some day she would try to possess Alaska; therefore, he favored the

24. Frederick Bancroft, "Seward's Idea of Territorial Expansion," North American Review, CLXVII, 79-89.

25. Ibid., p. 87.

cession of the territory to the United States. Necessary steps had been taken to keep the two nations on the most cordial terms. During our darkest hours every encouragement had been shown us from Petersburg.²⁷ This attitude of goodwill paved the way for the cession as soon as the Civil War ended.

In 1866 an attempted assassination was made upon the life of the Emperor of Russia. Our government sent Mr. Fox as an agent to express our national sympathy. He was especially charged to make known to the government and the people of Russia our most friendly feelings. In October of the same year, Mr. Stoickl who had long been the Russian Minister here, returned to St. Petersburg on a leave of absence, promising his best efforts to establish upon a permanent basis the friendliest relations between the two governments. Taking leave of the American people, this ambassador of imperialistic relinquishments had not long to wait for the opportunity to fulfill his promise. In conference with Reutern, Gorchakov, Krabbe, who were Russian officials and advisors to the Tsar, and Stoeckl, the Emperor on December 16, 1866, decided to sell Alaska to the United States. Stoeckl was dispatched to Washington to make the transaction, with instructions not to accept less than \$5,000,000 for the cession. Soon after his return, which was early in the month of March, 1867, the treaty for the

26. Hallie M. McPherson, op. cit., pp. 80-87.

27. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 4.

cession of Russian America to the United States was concluded
and signed March 30.
28

The treaty as first proposed was in the consideration of seven million dollars, but before the United States would be willing to ratify it, the clause in article VI in regard to the cession being unincumbered by any reservations, privileges or franchises, grants or possessions, etc., must be guaranteed literally. In a note dated March 23, 1867, addressed to Edward de Stoeckl, Secretary Seward, stated that with the President's approval they were willing to add \$200,000 to the former agreed sum if the above mentioned conditions in Article VI were met. Two days later Stoeckl acceded to this request and on March 29, Prince Gortchakoff notified the Russian Minister at Washington that his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russians had given his consent to the
29
cession.

The Emperor of Russia agrees to cede to the United States upon the exchange of ratifications all the territory and dominion now possessed by the said Majesty on the continent of America and in the adjacent islands, the same being contained within the geographical limits.³⁰

In the territory all buildings, lots, and property that were not personal were to become property of the United States, except that which belonged to the Oriental Greek Church. Archives and documents were to become the property of the United States, but authenticated copies were to remain ac-

28. House Exec. Doc. op. cit., p. 4.

29. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

30. Ibid., p. 6.

cessible to Russia. Russian inhabitants of the territory were to have the option of returning to Russia within three years, or remaining in the territory and becoming subject to the laws of the United States, with all of its enjoyment, rights and immunities granted to the citizens thereof.

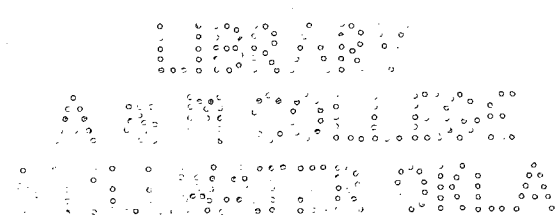
Immediate rights and possessions were to be deemed complete upon the exchange of ratifications, and the Emperor was to appoint agents, within a convenient period of time to make a formal delivery to the United States. Fortifications and military posts were to become the property of the United States immediately after the ratification and the Russian troops withdrawn as soon as possible.

For all these concessions the United States agreed to pay the sum of \$7,200,000 in gold to the authorized agent of the Emperor of Russia at the treasury in Washington.

The cession of territory and dominion herein made is declared free and unincumbered by any reservations, privileges, franchises, grants, or possessions, by any associated companies whether corporate or incorporate, Russian or any other, or by parties except merely private individual property holders.³¹

The draft was signed at Washington March 30, 1867, by William H. Seward, Secretary of State, and Edourd de Stoeckl, Privy Counsellor, envoy extraordinary of the Emperor of Russia, and was to be ratified and exchanged at Washington within three months, or sooner if possible. The treaty was ratified, signed and made known at Washington June 20, 1867

31. House Exec. Doc. op. cit., p. 9.



by President Andrew Johnson.⁵²

So grossly ignorant were the people of the United States concerning the climate and value of Alaska that many voices were raised in protest to its purchase. Numerous denunciatory names were applied to the region by those who opposed our acquiring it. Some called it Seward's snow farm and icebox. If there were those who thought it valueless there were also those who thought it worth many times the purchase price. Mr. Clay on May 10, 1867, wrote from the American Legation at Moscow, congratulating Secretary Seward upon the final negotiations for the purchase of Russian America.

I regard it worth at least fifty million dollars.³³ My attention was first called to this matter in 1863 when I came over the Atlantic with the Hon. Robert J. Walker upon whom I impressed the importance of our ownership of the western coast of the Pacific with its vast trade which was springing up with China and Japan and the western islands. The wonder will be that we ever got it at all.³⁴

There were those who contended that the beautiful rich country would be a bargain at any price, and estimated it being worth at least a hundred million dollars.³⁵

Many Americans who had been engaged in the Alaskan trade reported that under proper management the income from the fur seals obtained upon the islands of St. George and St. Paul

32. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., pp. 5-10; Diplomatic Correspondence, op. cit., pp. 2-5.

33. Diplomatic Correspondence, op. cit., p. 390.

34. House Exec. Doc., op. cit. p. 12.

35. Senate Exec. Doc., No. 50, 40 Cong., 2 sess., p. 3.

would, in a few years, pay the entire cost of the new territory. The annual cargoes of seal skins which were shipped from these islands to London and St. Petersburg amounted to more than \$1,000,000 annually. The fisheries and lumber trade of this region will be of immense value.

36

Captain Bryant of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, who had been in the whaling business for a number of years, put immense importance on the territory for its fisheries and lumber and said, "seven million is nothing in comparison to its value to our union."

37

The Boston Evening Transcript, and St. Louis Times urged that we close the gap between the Alaskan cession and our possessions on the south, in order that our Pacific territory would be coterminous.

38

When there was some doubt about the appropriation bill passing, numerous letters and resolutions came from different sections of the United States, urging the House to pass it. A typical one came from the legislature of Minnesota. The people of this section were eager that Alaska be transferred to the United States.

39

Secretary Seward set forth our reasons for purchasing Alaska as follows: (1) the advantages afforded those on the Pacific coast who were engaged in fishing, fur trade,

36. Senate Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 3.

37. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 25.

38. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

39. Senate Misc. Doc., No. 68, 40 Cong., 2 sess., p. 1.

and the securing of their ice supply from this region; (2) the constant desire of the people to extend our dominion, "a nation seeks an outlying territory as an individual seeks an outlying farm"; (3) to extend public institutions; (4) to dismiss one more monarch from our continent; (5) to keep Great Britain from getting this possession; and (6) as a sign of friendship to Russia.⁴⁰

A controversy arose in the House as to its authority in treaty making.⁴¹ The report of the sub-committee was given by Mr. C. C. Washburn, who stated that it was the right of the House to appropriate money to carry out a treaty made by the President and the Senate. Finally the bill appropriating the money necessary for the purchase was passed by one hundred thirteen yeas and forty-three nays, forty-four not voting.⁴²

40. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., pp. 136-142.

41. Report of House Comm., No. 37, 40 Cong., 2 sess. 1867-68, pp. 3-5. Mr. Banks, who was in charge of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, argued at length on the importance of a treaty, and why one should be executed. The power to negotiate and execute a compact is indispensable to the existence of government. The first conflict came in 1794 when the House called upon the President of the United States to furnish it with documents relative to the Jay treaty with England. President Washington refused to give the data, declaring that treaty making power rested with the President and the concurrence of the Senate. Washington said he knew no other meaning of the constitution as applied to treaty making. Upon receiving this message, the house passed a resolution, fifty four yeas and thirty-seven nays, to the effect that it did not claim any agency in treaty making, but when the stipulations provided for its execution by laws passed by congress that it is the right of the House to deliberate on the expediency for carrying such a treaty into effect.

42. Congressional Globe, 40 Cong., 2 sess., 1867-1868, p. 4055.

President Andrew Johnson notified Brigadier General Lovell H. Rousseau of his appointment as agent of the United States to receive from the agent of the Emperor of Russia, the Russian cession of territory to the United States.⁴³ On August 31, 1867 General Rousseau as the American commissioner, Baron Stoeckl, Captain Pestchoureff, and Captain Koskul set sail from New York going by the way of the Panama Canal, arriving at San Francisco twenty-three days later. General Hallack had made all necessary arrangements before their arrival and on the morning of September 27, the party left on the Ossipee, commanded by Captain Emmons, for Sitka.⁴⁴ They were preceded by General Davis who left in advance in order to make due preparations for the reception of the officials. The American and Russian commissioners reached Sitka October 18, and proceeded with the orders and formal delivery of the territory to the United States.

At three-thirty Prince Maksoutoff, General Rousseau, and Captain Pestchoureff appeared, taking their positions near the flag staff, and were saluted by the military command, then Captain Pestchoureff gave the signal to lower the Russian flag. As soon as it began to move down the staff a gun thundered from the Ossipee followed by one from the Russian battery. These were fired alternately until the twenty-one-gun salute was given. One tragedy marred the beautiful ceremony. As the Russian flag was lowered, it became entwined in

43. House Exec. Doc., op. cit. p. 20.

44. House Exec. Doc. No. 125, 40 Cong., 2 sess. XI, pp. 2-5.

the ropes of the flag staff. It was jerked by the soldier who was lowering it until the border was pulled off. Finally one of the soldiers had to climb the pine flagpole to release the flag.⁴⁵

Captain Pestchouroff turned to General Rousseau and said:

By the authority of his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, I transfer to you, the agent of the United States, all the territory and dominion now possessed by his majesty on the continent of America, and in the adjacent islands, according to the treaty made by these two powers.⁴⁶

General Rousseau replied:

I accept from you, as agent from his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, the territory and dominion which you have transferred to me; as the commissioner on the part of the United States, I receive the same.⁴⁷

As the American flag was raised, a gun from the Russian battery thundered and was answered by an American, until the twenty-one-gun salute was given. The stars and stripes were raised forever in a new land.⁴⁸ Although the formal transfer was over and we were occupants of a new domain larger than the thirteen original colonies the paying for it provoked many issues and caused embarrassing reflections on our governmental officials.

By no means was the government's trouble at an end when the treaty of cession was complete. After the President and

45. House Exec. Doc., No. 125, 40 Cong., 2 sess. XI, p. 5.

46. House Exec. Doc., op. cit., p. 73.

47. Ibid.

48. House Exec. Doc. No. 117, 40 Cong. XI, 1-4.

Senate had concurred on the treaty with Russia the burden of finance or appropriation fell heavily upon a reluctant House who had become offended when its advice had not been sought by the State Department. To pass the bill was a long and arduous task. Before it became a law many devices of a questionable nature were used in securing its passage. So disgusting was the whole thing that Stoeckl on a number of occasions gave up in despair, cabling his government for instructions. On one occasion he suggested after a careful study of the situation that there was only one of two things to do, either to give the territory outright to the United States or tell its officials that since Russia had done its part by the treaty, it would be embarrassed if the agreement were broken. Finally, after weeks of debate, Congress approved the appropriation bill on July 14, 1868 for \$7,200,000 payable in coin. And on the following day Secretary Seward asked the Secretary of the Treasury to issue a warrant to Edward de Stoeckl for the amount involved. On August 1, 1868, F. E. Spinner, Treasurer of the United States issued draft number 9759 on Treasury warrant number 927 for \$7,200,000 payable to Edward de Stoeckl who later acknowledged receipt of the entire amount. Records show the draft was registered on the same day by N. L. Jeffries, Registrar of the Treasury.

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No sooner had the transaction been concluded than rumors became numerous about the "Alaskan Swindle". Just where

they started, what prompted them is indeed a mystery (in part at least) but they grew to the extent that public sentiment demanded an investigation of the whole affair to determine the use made of the appropriation. Adding its contribution to the already supposed fraud, the Worcester Spy edited by a member of the House made a statement that of the \$7,200,000 voted for the purchase of Alaska, Russia only received \$5,000,000 and various newspaper firms were rewarded out of the balance. Why should the New York Tribune receive \$20,000, the publisher of the Washington Chronicle \$25,000, Robert J. Walker \$25,000 in gold, and George W. Riggs, a banker of Washington receive a loan from the Treasury for \$300,000 which was never made public? So specific were the allegations that a committee of eight members of the House, (H. P. Bromwell, J. M. Broomall, J. Coburn, Stephen Taber, Calvin Hulburd, J. A. Peters, T. A. Plants, and J. Lawrence Getz), was appointed to examine various witnesses and receive testimony on the purchase and payment of Alaska. From December 16, 1868 to February 8, 1869 the hearings were held.

Early in the investigation the chairman, Mr. Bromwell, invited the Russian legation to tender to the committee any information in its possession which would tend to clear the matter and satisfy the public mind as to the disposal of the funds. The invitation was received, comment, (mostly private) was made but evidence was tendered. From this time until the final report was made, according to the groups own statement,

the procedure was extremely cautious for fear of embarrassing a "friendly foreign government."⁵¹

Coming before the committee Francis Spinner, the Secretary of Treasury, swore that the warrant for \$7,200,000 was signed by his assistant made payable to Baron de Stoeckl and assigned over to George W. Riggs, a banker of Washington, who took a transfer draft on the office in New York for \$7,000,000 and one for \$100,000; by request he left on special deposit \$100,000. This special deposit was drawn out as follows: August 3, \$25,000; August 4, \$35,000; September 9, \$20,000; and September 16, \$20,000. These were all by transfer checks payable to Riggs.⁵²

When called and sworn, Riggs, a banker residing in Washington, stated that on August 1, 1868 he received a warrant on the Treasury of the United States for \$7,200,000 in gold which Baron Stoeckl endorsed payable to him. This was given to him in his office and he took it to the Treasury and received a transfer draft for \$7,000,000 and another for \$100,000, leaving \$100,000 on special deposit to be drawn out at his request. He paid to the agent of Baring Brothers and Company (England) \$7,035,000 less his fee for remitting that sum which was one twentieth of one per cent. On Stoeckl's order, he asserted, Robert J. Walker was paid \$26,000 in gold for his services in the passage of the appropriation bill, but not one cent was retained for himself. After pay-

51. Report of House Committee No. 35, 40 Cong., 3 sess., pp. 1-3.

52. Ibid., p. 7.

ing Walker's fee the Russian Minister was paid in person at different times (from August 1 to September 16, 1868) the entire remaining part of the purchase appropriation. He said the amounts, to the best of his memory, were \$18,000 at one time, then \$35,000, at another time \$45,000, later paying the remainder of \$41,000. When asked if the Russian Government received more than \$7,000,000, he answered that he did not know. The committee in charge of the investigation asked Riggs why the entire amount was not transferred in one sum rather than divided as it was. In response to this question Riggs answered that he did not know except by rumor which was undoubtedly founded on the truth. He was told that Stoeckl, the Russian Minister, had some very heavy expenses, having paid \$10,000 in gold for one telegram in corresponding with Moscow.

Robert J. Walker upon being questioned on December 17, stated that he had been interested in Alaska for more than twenty years, having suggested to President Polk as early as 1845 that this territory should be acquired. His testimony disclosed his connection with Stoeckl, as counsel for the Russian Government. For such services as he rendered his fee was \$26,000 in gold. From this amount he paid F. P. Stanton \$5,000 for his service as a lawyer in the matter. In addition to the amount given to him by the banker, he received \$2,300 from Baron Stoeckl. Inasmuch as the Washington Chronicle was of much help in giving space and publishing information on Alaska, Walker suggested to the Russian Minister

that it should be paid \$3,000 in gold. As Stoeckl agreed to this the former said he converted the amount into greenback and paid it to D. C. Forney, stating: "I forgot how much it made or what the premium was." Mr. Broomall asked, "do you mean to say all the rest of the appropriation went to the Russian Government"? Walker answered:

I really do not know what Baron Stoeckl did with the rest of it, except he complained to me that the whole thing had been very expensive. He complained particularly about the telegrams to and from Russia and other charges which he said were enormous: but I do not think he paid or offered to pay one dollar to any member of either House of Congress, or to anybody connected with the press."

Mr. Walker testified to the fact he wrote articles which were published without his signature, and they were distributed among the members of Congress.

F. P. Stanton acknowledged receipt of \$5,000 for his service as a lawyer, in connection with the passage of the appropriation bill through the House of Representatives, but he denied that he possessed knowledge that any member of the House received any money; although he had been told by Mr. Painter, a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, that Mr. Riggs paid \$30,000 to some individuals whose names he did not know.

The manager of the Evening Press Association, W. Scott Smith, testified that to his knowledge a Mr. Noah and his brother, R. J. received a large sum and that General Banks received \$250,000. In testifying, Robert J. Noah, Editor

of the New York Democrat, told the committee his brother, M. N. Noah was given \$1,000 by the Russian Minister for information showing the importance of Alaska furnished to the
54
Committee on Foreign Relations.

Secretary of State William H. Seward stated that to his honest opinion the entire cost of the transaction to the United States Government for the negotiations and everything
55
did not exceed \$500. However, when he found so much opposition in the press relative to our acquiring this territory he sent a young man by the name of Diamon to New York and Albany for the purpose of collecting clippings and extracts out of newspapers on file in these libraries, which were published by the Federal Press when Jefferson was President, to show the attacks on his administration at the time of the Louisiana Purchase. By bringing before the public the analogy of the accusations he hoped to show how absurd they were, because Louisiana for many years had proved very profitable. Seward said, "I paid his expenses in addition to his salary." Upon being questioned by the committee, Mr. Hinton, author of the article in the Worcester Spy which caused so much confusion, stated he knew nothing about the figures and accusations with reference to the disposal of the appropriation money other than what he had heard rumored by various individuals on different occasions. Not knowing the rumors

54. Report of House Committee No. 35, 40 Cong., 3 sess., p. 21.

55. Ibid. p. 10.

to be facts, form was given to the story and the resolution
 56
 made to satisfy public sentiment.

The half-hearted pursuance of the whole matter would lead one to believe there was little effort made to substantiate or refute the accusations made by newspapers and individuals. In summarizing the results the committee of eight members, four members signed one part of the report while the remaining half signed another part in which the activities of Robert J. Walker and F. P. Stanton were condemned because they had kept their monetary rewards secret and had endeavored to use their influence for their own personal gain when the integrity of the United States was in-

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 volved. Evidently the Russian Government never received more than \$7,000,000 of the amount approved by the United States for that purpose. Testimonies bore evidence to the fact that Robert J. Walker, F. P. Stanton, the Washington Chronicle, and the Noah Brothers all received an aggregate sum amounting to \$33,300 and the other amounts issued from August 1 to September 16, 1868 in relatively small amounts never reached the officials at Moscow.

Many motives have been given as to the reason why the Russian navy came to the United States during the Civil War and the influence of it on the purchase of Alaska. If the navy came without the express purpose of aiding our govern-

56. Report of the House Committee No. 35, 40 Cong., 3 sess.,
 p. 26.

57. Ibid., p. 6.

ment, as some have indicated, its presence had a very constructive influence and tended to bring the two countries to a mutual understanding. Surely the factor of friendship cannot be overlooked in this cession of Alaska by the Russian Government to the United States, because attempts were made to acquire territory in the Carribean Sea (Haiti and Santo Domingo) and failed completely. Sumner favored the treaty for Alaska "so as to steal a march on our American foe, England, and to do our ancient friend, Russia, a substantial favor."⁵⁸ We could hardly afford to offend a country who had evidenced her goodwill by sending her navy to our shore, (at least this was the idea uppermost in the minds of many of the American people), in throwing a territory back in her face which we had solicited.⁵⁹ General Banks who was chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs urged the conclusion of the treaty on the account of the long standing friendship of Russia for the United States.⁶⁰

American newspapers were in favor of the acquisition for commercial reasons and as a reward for Russia's friendship. Only one important newspaper came out against the purchase and this was because of the personal conflict between its

58. T. A. Bailey, "Why the United States Purchased Alaska," Pacific Historical Review, III (1934) p. 46.

59. Ibid., p. 48.

60. James G. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress, II, p. 334.

editor, Horace Greeley, and Secretary Seward.

Few have realized the great value of Alaska. Although a commercial adventure, it has proved worthwhile from a financial standpoint, for in a twelve-year period (1871-1883) about \$5,000,000 in rent was paid into the United States Treasury from the Pribilof Islands alone. ⁶² These islands which are quite small in comparison with others, have produced for years an abundance of seals. Frank N. Walker who was employed in the land service of the Russian American telegraph expedition, estimated that 125,000 seals could be killed annually on the island of St. Paul and 40,000 on the island of St. George. In 1869 he said after all the expenses were paid, the yearly revenue from this source alone to the

61. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 49. Secretary Seward bought it to satisfy his own desire of expansion, to improve the strategic position of the United States in the Pacific, to revive the decaying condition of the State Department, and to crown his diplomatic career. Frederic Bancroft, "Seward's Idea of Territorial Expansion," *North American Review*, CLXVII, pp. 79-89.

62. Herbert Howe Bancroft, *History of Alaska 1730-1885*, A. L. Bancroft and Company, Publishers, San Francisco, 1886, XXXIII p. 598.

government would be \$500,000.

Notwithstanding the long period of the fur trade, land fur bearing animals are still an important revenue producing industry in Alaska. In 1934, furs to the value of \$1,951,000 were shipped from the territory.

Although the minerals in this region have only been partially developed it produced between 1880 and 1934 the stupendous sum of \$680,316,000. The output for 1916 alone was over six times the purchase price. Gold, copper, and silver are the leading mineral products, with large quantities of coal, lead, and tin.

Due to proper management the commerce of Alaska has increased over a period of years; however, it suffered with

63. House Misc. Doc. No. 11, 40 Cong., 2 sess., I, p. 2. There are about 1,650,000 breeding males and females on these islands. St. Paul, the larger of the two islands is from one to five miles in width and about sixty miles in length. Male seals attain their full growth at the age of six years, when it measures from seven to eight feet in length and six to seven feet in circumference. Its color is dark brown with gray hair on its neck and shoulders; the weight is from 600 to 1200 pounds. A full grown female measures from four to five feet in length and about three feet in circumference; weighing from 100 to 300 pounds. When it leaves the water it is a dark steel mixed on the back and lighter about the breast and sides. After being on the shore for a few days the color gradually changes to a dark brown on the back and an orange hue on the breast and throat. A female attains its full growth at about the third or fourth year, at which time it brings forth its young. The pups at birth weigh from six to twelve pounds, being dark brown in color. Senate Exec. Doc. No. 32, 41 Cong. 2 sess., pp. 2-9.

64. Annual Report of Governor of Alaska for 1935, Department of Interior, Washington, p. 24.

65. Ibid., p. 15.

other countries, a relapse during the depression of 1929-33. In 1890, the exports exceeded the imports by \$6,688,965.50. Since 1910 the United States has furnished 97% of the imports and used or bought 96% of its exports. According to statistics compiled by the Department of Commerce in Washington, the total commerce from Alaska in 1930 was \$90,232,413; imports were \$33,045,267; and exports were \$57,187,146. This leaves a balance of trade in favor of Alaska of \$24,114,879. Gold and silver shipments alone during the year of 1934 amounted to \$7,842,793, while the total value of the fishery products for the same year was \$14,193,293.⁶⁶

From the time the territory was purchased in 1867 up to 1930, it has produced fish products valued at \$865,458,965. The most important of the fisheries of Alaska is the salmon industry with halibut, herring, whale, clam, shrimp, and cod following in order named. In 1929 there were 29,283 persons engaged in the different branches of this industry in Alaska, whites, 1,672; natives, 5,365; Philipinoas, 4,043; Japanese, 1,377; Mexicans, 1,189; Chinese, 959; Negroes, 145; Porto Ricians, 40; and others 93.⁶⁷

Alaskan natives are divided into twenty-four tribal organizations, speaking twenty or more dialects, most of which belong to Kodiak, Aleutian, and Koloshiusk languages.

66. Annual Report of Governor of Alaska for 1935, Department of Interior, Washington, pp. 10-20.

67. General Information Regarding the Territory of Alaska, op. cit., p. 44.

The Indians of the northwest part of the territory are very peaceful, while those in the southern part are warlike.

About 5500 Russians, most of whom resided on the Barnof Islands, belonged to the population of the territory in 1869.⁶⁸ According to the census which was taken in 1929, the total population (including all nationalities) was 59,278.⁶⁹

People of Alask have their three main branches of government as we have in the United States. The executive power is vested in a governor, who is appointed by the President of the United States by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, for a term of four years. Two houses compose the legislative body. The senate which consists of eight members, two from each of the four judicial divisions into which Alaska is divided, the term of each member is four years, one member from each division being elected each two years. The house of representatives is composed of sixteen members chosen for a term of two years, four from each of the judicial divisions. The legislature convenes biannually at Juneau, the capital, on the first Monday in March on odd years. Sixty days is the length of the regular session, but the governor may prolong the term, not to exceed seventy five days in all. This territory is not without its courts, for the judicial power is vested in the District Court of the United States for the districts of Alaska. Each of the four judicial divisions is

68. House Exec. Doc., 40 Cong., 3 sess., 1868-69, Report of Secretary of Interior, pp. 90, 92.

69. General Information Regarding the Territory of Alaska, op. cit., p. 9.

presided over by a judge appointed by the President of the
 United States for a term of four years.⁷⁰

To the students of education Alaska should furnish a new field of interest. There are two classes of districts, incorporated districts and incorporated town districts. Schools in incorporated districts are managed by a board of five members who are elected by popular vote as those in the incorporated towns. Territorial schools are supported largely by appropriations from the territorial treasury. Teachers in these schools compare favorably with those in the United States, those teaching high school subjects being university or college graduates. Few inexperienced teachers are hired in Alaska. During 1928-29, the following were the four-year high schools: Anchorage, Cordova, Douglas, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Nome, Petersburg, Seward, Skagway, Valdez, and Wrangel. There were other schools which enrolled pupils for 1, 2, and 3 years high school work. In 1929-30 there were seventeen schools with a high school enrollment of 785 and an elementary enrollment of 2,651, or a total enrollment of 3,436. There were 116 high school graduates and 216 elementary graduates. The total number of teachers was 157. These were in incorporated cities and school districts. Total expenditures amounted to \$372,664.38.⁷¹

The governor of Alaska is ex officio superintendent of Public Instruction; however, supervision and direction of

70. General Information Regarding the Territory of Alaska,
op. cit., pp. 16-18.

71. Ibid. pp. 79-81.

schools is vested in a territorial board of education composed of five members who choose from their own number a commissioner of education as chief executive officer. This board prescribes rules and regulations for the general management of all the school districts. Common school districts are established by a council but the established schools are supervised by a local board composed of three members who are elected annually by popular vote. These are within incorporated schools.⁷²

Surprisingly enough to many, the average teacher has had nine years' experience, four of which have been in Alaska. During 1935, ninety-nine schools were mentioned with a total enrollment of 4,299 including two vocational boarding schools and a school for the blind. Eighty-six teachers were employed twenty-four of whom were native Alaskan Indians.⁷³ In 1934 Congress further extended the educational opportunities to the people in Alaska by providing \$175,000 to be used in constructing twenty new schools. By 1935, nineteen of these were complete.

As a part of the relief program of the United States Government, the fertile Matanuska Valley in Alaska has been surveyed and laid out in 200 forty-acre tracts for drouth stricken families in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In May 1934, 200 families were moved from these states and

72. General Information Regarding the Territory of Alaska, op. cit., pp. 79-81.

73. Annual Report of the Governor of Alaska to the Secretary of Interior, June, 1935, pp. 31-32.

placed on the surveyed land, all of which lies within an eight mile radius of Palmer, Alaska. These came with farm machinery, livestock, and necessary equipment to begin farming as soon as the land could be cleared and prepared for cultivation. By the spring of 1935, 1,185 acres were prepared for hay, barley, wheat, potatoes, and vegetables. So productive and suitable was this region to agriculture that by 1936, 200 Guernsey cows, 220 horses, 240 Durac-Jersey hogs, 8,500 white leghorn pullets, and 600 pure-bred Romney sheep were on these farms. Thus was started the first large colony from the United States sponsored as a definite movement not only to relieve those who were in trouble, but to develop in a more vigorous way the latent possibilities of Alaska. What will the future of this last American frontier be?

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