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## *Thwarting Southern Schemes and British Bluster in the Pacific Northwest*

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FOUR MONTHS BEFORE JOHN BROWN seized the armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, events in the far northwestern corner of the United States also brought the nation to the brink of war—not with itself, but with England. The blood spilled in June 1859 belonged to a pig, leading to one of the most bizarre episodes in U.S. diplomatic history. After Abraham Lincoln's election as president, the tensions from decades of mutual suspicions between the United States and its northern neighbor, compounded by the presence of a vocal group of southerners in the regional capital of Victoria, took on overtones of the Civil War.

As the Civil War began, the Pacific Northwest presented very real concerns for the Union government. Royal Governor James Douglas was openly belligerent toward the United States. Therefore, he might have ignored British neutrality and launched preemptive strikes into Washington Territory, or ignored attempts by southern sympathizers on Vancouver Island trying to outfit a raider with which to attack U.S. commerce in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> Miners in the Fraser River region with Confederate sympathies might have launched paramilitary attacks into Washington Territory.

A new northern front of the Civil War opened in December 1863 when Confederate agents seized the S.S. *Chesapeake* off Cape Cod and sailed it to Nova Scotia.<sup>2</sup> A second cross-border operation occurred in September 1864 when twenty Confederate agents attempted to capture the U.S.S. *Michigan*, the sole Union warship patrolling the Great Lakes. The attempt was foiled when one of the conspirators was captured and revealed the plot.<sup>3</sup> Most famously, on October 19, 1864, a Confederate lieutenant and twenty men crossed from Québec into Vermont, robbing three banks in the small town of St. Albans, making off with \$200,000 before fleeing back across the



MAP 1.1. The Pacific Northwest in the Civil War Era.

border.<sup>4</sup> That no military (or paramilitary) operations emerged in the Pacific Northwest during the Civil War demonstrates how effectively Union officials in the region controlled the situation and avoided another front of the war breaking out on the Pacific Slope.

Long before the outbreak of the Civil War, however, U.S. officials wrestled with the dilemmas posed by their uncertain northwestern border. Political maneuvering between the two countries had dominated the “Oregon question” ever since Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1805 at Fort Clatsop, Oregon. In 1818, the United States and England agreed to the joint occupation of the disputed Oregon lands (essentially from 54°40’ latitude south to the present-day California–Oregon border, and west of the Continental Divide). Failure to work out a satisfactory division of those

lands in 1827 led to an extension of the joint occupancy agreement, a policy that was still in place in the 1840s. Growing U.S. expansionist sentiments in the Pacific Northwest rekindled British distrust and led to rising tension between the British and Americans, reaching a critical level during the 1844 presidential campaign. James K. Polk based his enthusiastic expansionist candidacy on American braggadocio, political rhetoric, and Manifest Destiny. Polk's campaign platform called for the "reannexation of Texas and the reoccupation of Oregon." The British took the hostile political language quite seriously, and prepared to defend the farthest western region of British North America from U.S. expansionism.

Despite the heated rhetoric, which served its purpose in helping to get Polk elected, the president-elect softened his demands.<sup>5</sup> Although in his inaugural address he spoke boldly about pursuing all of Oregon, Polk's initial offer to the British was more restrained.<sup>6</sup> Like his predecessors, Polk's first official proposal to settle the nagging Oregon question was to extend the 49th parallel as a boundary line all the way to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>7</sup> When British officials refused the offer, Polk asked Congress to terminate the 1827 joint occupation agreement.<sup>8</sup> The expansionist House quickly complied, but the measure was shot down in the Senate. In response to the rapidly deteriorating situation, one British official suggested sending naval vessels both to the Puget Sound region and to the mouth of the Columbia River. In March 1845 it appeared the two nations might go to war over the unsettled Oregon question.

By then, with the annexation of Texas underway and war with Mexico looming, the vigor of President Polk's expansionism was evident. Fortunately, the British ambassador returned with a new offer: England agreed to the 49th parallel line, excluding Vancouver Island, with the details regarding the San Juan Islands (between Vancouver Island and the mainland) to be worked out in arbitration. In April 1846, with General Zachary Taylor's forces already south of the Rio Nueces, provoking war with Mexico, Congress agreed to arbitration with Britain and averted war on two fronts.<sup>9</sup>

Relations between the two nations improved after 1846 but remained precarious, as the dispute over San Juan Island made obvious in 1859. Both U.S. and British citizens had settled the island, repeating the pattern of joint occupancy and uncertain ownership. Then came a military showdown that commenced with the death of a pig.

The British inhabitants, who outnumbered the Americans until May 1859, were employees of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and they did not

recognize U.S. claims to any part of San Juan Island. One interloping American named Lyman Cutler sparked the international conflict when he took matters into his own hands. After building a cabin he planted a garden, which he fenced as best he could. Unfortunately for Cutler, free-roaming HBC livestock easily trampled the garden and uprooted his potato patch. Following unsuccessful complaints to the local HBC official, Cutler shot and killed an offending hog, for which he attempted to pay the pig's owner. The seemingly justifiable killing of the wandering British pig very nearly ignited a war, bringing England and the United States closer to armed conflict than at any time since Andrew Jackson won the Battle of New Orleans in January 1815.<sup>10</sup>

Fortunately, the Pig War, as it is now known, did not lead to the shedding of human blood. However, the bluster and maneuvering revealed the complicated international relations that existed in the Pacific Northwest. Soon the bonds between the U.S. Army officers would be cut asunder by the Civil War. As summarized after the fact by Captain L. C. Hunt, the officer with the American contingent on San Juan Island: "I am confident that this whole imbroglio is a disgraceful plot involving General Harney, a dull animal, Mr. Commissioner Campbell, a weak, wordy sort of man; Captain [George E.] Pickett, to some extent, whose main fault perhaps has been bad judgment in allowing himself to be used as a tool by the main conspirators."<sup>11</sup>

Another officer, Major Granville Haller, contended that Harney and Pickett, both southern-born, had conspired to ignite a conflict with the British as part of a plot to help the South in its growing political disagreement with the North; indeed, their Civil War records gave credence to suspicions about their roles in bringing on the Pig War. Pickett, who had served in the Pacific Northwest since 1855 and had fathered a child during that time with a Haida woman named Morning Mist, resigned his commission in June 1861 and left to join the Confederacy. A major general's commission and infamous failure at Gettysburg awaited him. William S. Harney never joined the Confederacy, but while serving as the commander of the Department of the West in April 1861, he failed to prevent the pro-Confederate state militia, commanded by future Confederate general Sterling Price, from nearly taking control of the State of Missouri as part of the Price-Harney Truce. This action led Missouri's Unionist leaders to press for his removal. He was replaced by General Nathaniel Lyon in late May and recalled to Washington, D.C.<sup>12</sup>

In an attempt to prevent the pig incident from causing a war, Haller advised proposing a joint occupation to the British authorities that might mollify both sides, at least temporarily.<sup>13</sup> However, the firebrand captain

would have none of it. According to Haller, “He assured me that if they [the British] attempted to land he would fire on them. He believed they would land, and considered war inevitable.”<sup>14</sup> The British authorities had heard that Pickett was encouraging Americans to settle on the island: Pickett “promised protection to any and every American Citizen who might think proper to squat on the Island of San Juan.”<sup>15</sup> As Captain Hunt saw it, “Nothing has saved us from a bloody collision but the patient dignity and forbearance of the old admiral [British Rear Admiral Lambert Baynes], who had an overwhelming force at hand.”<sup>16</sup>

The mistrust caused by the Pig War was still percolating two years later when civil war broke out in the United States. It was in this atmosphere that pro-Confederate elements in the provinces of British Columbia and Vancouver Island (then separate) schemed to initiate operations against U.S. targets, both on land and afloat, during the war years. In light of the history of periodic cleavages in the relations between Americans and Britons in British North America, made worse by the 1859 Pig War, Department of the Pacific leaders had to craft policies that addressed all the potential dangers that might lurk north of the border while treading lightly on issues of sovereignty.

After the firing on Fort Sumter, the order came for U.S. troops to leave Camp Pickett on San Juan Island and head east for combat service.<sup>17</sup> District commander General George Wright found a way to countermand the order to abandon the U.S. post. Wright’s long service in the region enabled him to invoke the ghosts of ten years of white–Native American conflict in the Pacific Northwest (which included a Native attack on the tiny frontier town of Seattle in 1856) to change minds in Washington, D.C.<sup>18</sup> Using the threat of Native American raids as a pretext, Wright gave new orders, nullifying those issued just ten days earlier, thereby ensuring that an American presence remained on the island throughout the war. While at most of the other posts in the Department of the Pacific, where volunteers replaced the professional soldiers, Regular Army forces garrisoned Camp Pickett throughout the duration of the war.

While Americans may have believed in 1861 that the true conflict lay far to the east, Royal Governor James Douglas saw an opportunity to seize the old Oregon country. Authorities in London refused.<sup>19</sup> Undeterred, in December 1861 the pugnacious governor wrote to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Duke of Newcastle, arguing there “was no reason why we should not push overland from Puget Sound and establish advanced

posts on the Columbia River.”<sup>20</sup> Knowing that U.S. troop dispositions were in flux and that some northern posts were likely to be abandoned, he informed the Colonial office that “there is little real difficulty in that operation, as the Coast is entirely unprovided with defensive works.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, there was no doubt that the British Navy could easily take control of Puget Sound and the Columbia River. The governor assured his superiors that “with Puget Sound, and the line of the Columbia River in our hands, we should hold the only navigable outlets of the country—command its trade, and soon compel it to submit to Her Majesty’s Rule.”<sup>22</sup> It was just the sort of move Confederate sympathizers in the Pacific Northwest hoped the British would make.

Fortunately for the Union, officials in London did not share Douglas’s enthusiasm for a conflict with the United States. Although England did send five thousand troops to British North America in the aftermath of the November 1861 *Trent* Affair, they were stationed in the more populated eastern region.<sup>23</sup> Left with few options, the royal governor authorized the raising of two volunteer rifle corps to complement the royal marines and engineers stationed in the region, but for defensive purposes only.<sup>24</sup>

Douglas, however, was not the only threat to the United States north of the border. Ever since the 1858 Fraser River gold rush, thousands of Americans had been roaming the rivers and creeks of British Columbia in search of gold. Inevitably, few found the wealth they sought, and while most drifted back across the border, a sizeable contingent remained in British Columbia or tried their luck on Vancouver Island. By the outbreak of the Civil War, Victoria (on Vancouver Island) was home to a growing southern population. The editor of the *Victoria Chronicle* noted, “Shortly after the outbreak of the war many sympathizers with the Slave States came to reside in Victoria. Some leased residences, others took apartments at hotels, still others went into business while a fourth class proceeded to Cariboo and engaged in gold mining and trading.”<sup>25</sup>

British Columbia and Vancouver Island afforded southern sympathizers a perfect haven. “With few exceptions the English residents sympathized with the rebels,” an investigation determined.<sup>26</sup> Union officials worried that Confederate partisans might use the two British colonies as bases from which to launch raids south across the border, or from which to attack Union shipping interests in the Pacific, including the crucial gold shipments (each one worth more than a million dollars) that were leaving from San Francisco.<sup>27</sup>

The transitory population of expatriated Americans on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia worried Union officials; however, it was the royal governor who maintained the southern-sympathizing atmosphere in the region. Governor Douglas's tolerant attitude toward pro-Confederates is intriguing given his background: the governor, who was born in Guyana, was of one-eighth (or possibly one-fourth) African heritage, and his wife was half Cree. The fact that neither of them would have had any rights under Confederate law was, however, less important than the prevailing sense of British opportunism and disdain for the U.S. federal government.<sup>28</sup> During the time that Douglas served as governor of Vancouver Island, there was a small population of persons of African descent in the colonies, most of whom had come from the California gold fields, further adding to the puzzle.

The outbreak of the Civil War brought racial tensions to the fore on Vancouver Island, as demonstrated by an incident in September 1861. During a benefit concert for the Royal Hospital in Victoria, two white men attempted to bribe some of the night's performers to keep them from singing as long as African-descended patrons were in the audience. When the performers rejected the bribe, they were pelted by food, and flour was poured on two of the black audience members. A riot ensued and eventually arrests were made, although no one was convicted. Whatever the nationality of the men who started the riot, the incident illustrates that Victoria was not devoid of racial tension.<sup>29</sup> In such an unstable environment, made more so by a growing populace of expatriated southerners as well as a governor driven by the opportunity that an America at war with itself presented him (and by extension, Great Britain), Union concerns about the Pacific Northwestern border make perfect sense.

The level of concern among officials in Washington, D.C., is indicated by the fact that an American consulate post was established in Victoria in 1862. There had never been any such consulate on the Pacific Coast of British North America, nor had there been much reason for such a post. Once the Civil War was under way, however, and British and U.S. relations deteriorated, President Lincoln needed someone he knew and trusted to keep a vigilant eye on the British governor and southern sympathizers on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia. So he sent Allen Francis. Few people had known Abraham Lincoln as long or as well. Francis had moved to Springfield, Illinois, in 1834 to work for his brother Simeon at the Springfield *Sangamo Journal*. During their time in the Illinois capital, the Francis brothers became intimate friends with Lincoln and, according to legend, loaned him books on



the legal profession and later helped him reconcile with Mary Todd, his future wife. The two brothers left Springfield in 1859—Simeon for Oregon and Allen for California. The presence of trusted friends in a remote region, vulnerable to both internal and external threats, was fortuitous for the new president.<sup>30</sup> When war broke out Simeon Francis was appointed paymaster for the military District of Oregon, and Allen Francis became the first U.S. consul at Vancouver Island Colony.<sup>31</sup>

Francis's activities far exceeded the normal responsibilities of such a political office. He maintained a network of spies in Victoria employed to keep him abreast of any pro-Confederate activity on either Vancouver Island or in British Columbia, with its transitory population of American miners from the now-divided states.<sup>32</sup> As he told District of Oregon commander Brigadier General Benjamin Alvord, "I have neither spared time, pains, nor expense in endeavoring to learn what our enemies were doing."<sup>33</sup>

Francis went about his task with a diligence that bordered on paranoia. He reported everything, no matter how implausible or insignificant, that came to his consulate post in Victoria.<sup>34</sup> As he quickly found out, little of what he was told had to do with odd or threatening British military activities. Instead, most of his reports focused on insults, schemes, or dangers posed by Victoria's openly pro-Confederate population, almost all of whom were U.S. expatriates. No matter how far removed they were from the Confederate states, this pro-Confederate element sought to pose a threat to the Union cause.

Just a few months after assuming his post, Francis informed Secretary of State William H. Seward that "congregated here and in towns of British Columbia, are some desperate men from the rebel States, talking of expeditions to California and Nevada Territory for revolutionary purposes."<sup>35</sup> Gold shipments sailing from San Francisco remained a tempting target, and Confederate sympathizers might also try to organize a raiding force of expatriated southerners to attack Union targets in Washington Territory. The South's need for gold to purchase supplies in Europe was desperate, and Confederate sympathizers in Victoria eventually attempted to acquire and outfit a raider. (There was no attempt to launch land-based raids across the northwestern border.)

The early Confederate successes at the battles of Bull Run (in Virginia) and Wilson's Creek (in Missouri), emboldened the city's southern enclave, a number of whom gathered in the rooms of two Alabama brothers, John and Oliver Jeffreys, at the St. Nicholas Hotel, where they "became noisily jubi-



lant.”<sup>36</sup> *Chronicle* editor David W. Higgins, whom the southerners considered a loyal friend, remembered celebrating one “great rebel victory, and the company excelled all previous efforts in singing Confederate airs, while their rebel hearts, bursting with enthusiasm, found frequent vent in loud cheering.”<sup>37</sup> Not long after assuming his post, Consul Francis informed his superiors about the overtness of Confederate sympathy displayed in Victoria, assuring them that “I am watching their movements, and if any demonstration is made, or any of their schemes are developed, shall demand the interference of the authorities, and communicate the facts to [Department of Pacific commander] General Wright in San Francisco.”<sup>38</sup>

As the residents prepared to celebrate the Prince of Wales’s birthday with a two-day extravaganza on November 10 and 11, 1862, southern sympathizers, including one J. S. Shapard, seized that very public opportunity to display their allegiances by raising a Confederate flag. Francis informed Secretary Seward that a number of northern residents urged him to protest the affront, which he did. Governor Douglas, however, chose not to respond to the U.S. official until after the celebration had ended, feigning ignorance of the incident when he did.<sup>39</sup> Governor Douglas’s nonchalant response to Francis’s protest led some to assume that such actions would be openly tolerated.<sup>40</sup> Soon Confederate flags flew over a number of homes throughout Victoria, remaining a troubling (and insulting) issue until near the end of the war. As the governor of Washington Territory informed Seward in July 1864, “The officers and crew of every American Vessel that enters the Harbor of Victoria is insulted, & indignant, at the sight of the Rebel Flags flying in Victoria.” Of course, there was little Seward could do beyond putting political pressure on the British ambassador in Washington; officials with the Department of the Pacific could do even less.<sup>41</sup>

The population of unabashed Confederate sympathizers in Victoria was sufficiently large that in 1863 Shapard opened a new watering hole named the Confederate Saloon.<sup>42</sup> Consul Francis reported how “the miners are now coming down from the upper country, generally in desperate circumstances, mostly secesh, and ready for anything.”<sup>43</sup> This establishment soon became the meeting place of a group of roughly fifty southerners who called themselves the Southern Association.<sup>44</sup> This bar, and its churlish proprietor, quickly became a thorn in Consul Francis’s side. The saloon stayed open throughout the war. Only when Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse did Shapard face a rebuke, at the hands of a Union-sympathizing ship captain who publicly thrashed him in April 1865.<sup>45</sup>

It took time for Victoria's growing southern community to seize upon a specific idea of how best to aid the Confederate cause from so far away. As Confederate victories mounted in the East, southern sympathizers like the Jeffreys brothers decided that the best way to assist the southern cause was to disrupt Union commercial efforts along the Pacific coast. Of course, the gold shipments were the ultimate prize, but other Union targets plied the northern Pacific waters, too.

Before any attempts to attack Union commerce in the north Pacific could take place, however, local southern sympathizers needed a ship capable of serving as a raider. This proved to be a serious impediment to the privateers' visions of glory and plunder. Their first effort played out in the pages of Victoria's two rival newspapers, the *Chronicle* and the *Daily British Colonist*. The entire affair crystallized the difficulties facing Consul Francis and his operatives in Victoria. Despite the public nature of the incident, until the Confederate sympathizers actually violated England's official neutrality policy there was nothing he could do. Unless they crossed into U.S. territory on land or sea, Francis knew the local officials would not pay very close attention to the southerners' machinations.

On February 4, 1863, the Victoria *Chronicle* published an article declaring that a Confederate Navy officer had been in the city for a month, supposedly looking to purchase a ship with which to attack Union shipping. It was reported that he was trying to purchase an English ship, the *Thames*, which he intended to man with local sympathizers before setting out to capture San Francisco gold shipments.<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, as the *Chronicle* reported, the plan failed due to a lack of funds, which seems odd considering the presence of a number of southerners leading rather ostentatious lives in Victoria.<sup>47</sup> Allen Francis's reports demonstrate that he was intimately aware of the plot, to the point that he seemed to understand it had no chance to succeed. This failure forced the conspirators to come up with an alternate plan.

Simultaneous to the *Thames* affair Francis heard a rumor about an effort not to buy but to capture a ship already armed and ready to serve as a raider. The ship the conspirators hoped to seize was the U.S.S. *Shubrick*, which one old pioneer later recalled as "a handsome sidewheel steamer, far from slow for those days, perfectly seaworthy and safe for ocean navigation, [which] carried four or five brass cannon, and had a good supply of small arms, ammunition, etc."<sup>48</sup> However, designs to capture the *Shubrick* fell apart, "for the want of a leader in whom the banditti could confide," as Francis informed Captain Thomas Selfridge, the commander of the Navy yard on Mare Island in San

Francisco Bay.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Francis was confident in the ship's commander, noting that "Lieut. Selden is a true, reliable and efficient officer."<sup>50</sup> With the ship in trustworthy hands and the Confederate sympathizers disorganized and directionless, the second plot had no better chance to proceed than the first.

The failure of this second plot illuminates two points about Confederate sympathizers in western British North America. First, that no one was jailed, or even investigated, for their very public efforts to violate English neutrality laws made it clear they had little to fear from the British authorities in the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. Second, despite their self-confidence, disorganization and bad luck plagued the southern expatriates doing much of the work for Allen Francis and his agents.

Consul Francis took no public action but kept Secretary of State Seward apprised of developments. As Francis told the *Chronicle's* editor, once that particular danger had passed, "I knew what was going on all the time. My detectives kept me well informed."<sup>51</sup> Whether or not there was much truth to those particular stories is difficult to ascertain, but it kept the competing papers busy postulating on the veracity of the story; the *Chronicle* believed it, while the *Daily British Colonist* did not.

On March 15, 1863, officials in San Francisco seized the S.S. *Chapman*, which had been outfitted as a privateer vessel and was poised to leave the harbor.<sup>52</sup> Two boats full of armed seamen from the U.S.S. *Cyane*, which protected San Francisco harbor at General Wright's request, captured the would-be raider and its crew of twenty-one without a fight. After boarding the vessel, San Francisco police, working with the customs collector, Ira Rankin, discovered "a number of guns, ammunition, and other military stores were found on board."<sup>53</sup>

The capture of the *Chapman* conspirators demonstrated the gravity of the threat to the Union along the Pacific Coast and led Secretary of State Seward to reevaluate Consul Francis's report about the *Thames* uproar in Victoria. Given the heightened concerns about the Confederate threat to Union shipping, Seward sent a letter on March 31 to the British ambassador to the United States, Lord Lyons, explaining: "I regret to inform you that reliable information has reached this department that an attempt was made in January last, at Victoria, Vancouver's island, to fit out the English steamer *Thames* as a privateer, under the flag of the insurgents, to cruise against the merchant shipping of the United States in the Pacific. Fortunately, however, the scheme was temporarily, at least, frustrated by its premature expose."<sup>54</sup>

In addition to drawing Lord Lyons's attention to the topic, Seward applied considerable diplomatic pressure to the British ambassador and asked "the attention of her Majesty's colonial authorities to the subject, in order that such violations of the act of Parliament and of her majesty's proclamation may not be committed."<sup>55</sup> In other words, Seward expected the British government to compel Governor Douglas to enforce the neutrality policy.

But diplomatic pressure alone was not enough to assuage Francis's fears or General Wright's concerns.<sup>56</sup> In an effort to take more aggressive steps to protect Union shipping, the U.S.S. *Saginaw* was ordered from San Francisco to Puget Sound "without any unnecessary delay . . . for the purpose of obtaining information from the authorities, and from other sources, in relation to the equipment of rebel privateers in those waters."<sup>57</sup> The combination of the capture of the *Chapman*, the presence of a Union military vessel patrolling Puget Sound, and a series of Confederate reverses in the second half of 1863 quieted pro-southern rumblings on Vancouver Island, but only briefly. The *Saginaw* could not remain in the area long, which meant the plotters would resume their efforts. However, as Francis assured the ship's captain, those "connected with the scheme . . . are being closely watched."<sup>58</sup>

Despite these setbacks, the Southern Association continued to meet and brew desperate schemes amid drinks at the Confederate Saloon. As Francis told the naval commander at Mare Island, "There is still in this city a rebel organization, which has had several meetings within the last few weeks. They are awaiting, it seems from rumors, the receipt of letters of marque from the President of the so-called Confederate States."<sup>59</sup> Once again, Francis's agents had done their task well. The association's president, Jules David, had indeed submitted a request to the Confederate government in Richmond for official recognition of their effort to begin operations of a privateer for the southern cause as early as April 1862, but Richmond did not respond.

Having heard nothing for more than a year, David again requested letters of marque in October 1863.<sup>60</sup> In this second note he attempted to convince Confederate officials—among them Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, who received the letter—of the association's earnestness and the possibilities for success by writing: "It is our most anxious wish to do something for our country, and we can not serve her better than in destroying the commerce and property of our enemies. If you will for a moment reflect upon the extensive commerce of the Federal States with South America, California, the islands, China, and Japan, you can well imagine what a rich field we have before us."<sup>61</sup> David further explained, "We have at our disposal a first-class

steamer of over 400 tons, strongly built, and of an average speed of 14 miles. The money required to arm her and fit her out as a privateer will be raised without difficulty amongst our friends here."<sup>62</sup> The ploy worked, but in the wrong circles. With the war now going against the South, Confederate officials in Richmond did not consider the desperate scheme, and once again chose not to reply. However, the ever-vigilant American consul, Allen Francis, responded in his own way.

Once again proving just how well informed he was about the Confederate sympathizers' activities, Consul Francis described very accurately the Southern Association's plans in a letter to his brother, who was stationed at Fort Vancouver in Washington Territory (why he did not contact the proper military officials is a mystery).<sup>63</sup> He informed his brother that ever since a very fast 300-ton, all steel ship had arrived in Victoria the "rumors have been rife that the rebels have been trying to buy her for a privateer."<sup>64</sup> Simeon Francis understood the significance of the letter, but because he was not at his post when it arrived, a month passed before he turned the communiqué over to district commander Alvord on November 20.

General Alvord responded immediately to Consul Francis. After rebuking the diplomat for not directly informing the proper authorities, Alvord reassured Francis that he had requested naval reinforcements for Puget Sound months earlier. Alvord also informed the consul that he had passed the contents on to General Wright's headquarters, with the assumption the department commander would take action.<sup>65</sup> General Alvord acknowledged Francis's continued work, telling him he was "pleased to hear of your ceaseless vigilance, which should never be relaxed."<sup>66</sup>

Wright immediately took steps to strengthen the U.S. military presence in the waters of Puget Sound by requesting that Captain Thomas Selfridge, naval commander at the Mare Island Navy Yard, send a man-of-war to the region.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, the only possible naval vessel suited for the task was the U.S.S. *Narragansett*, which needed both repairs and additional men to fill out its crew to a serviceable contingent.<sup>68</sup> After being assigned men from the U.S.S. *Saginaw*, the *Narragansett* sailed for Puget Sound on December 11, 1863. Finding no privateer activity in the region, the ship returned to San Francisco by March 1864 and underwent more extensive repairs.<sup>69</sup>

The onset of winter seems to have sapped much of the Confederate sympathizers' eagerness to acquire a vessel for privateering and diminished their commitment to begin anew in the spring. Richmond's failure to acknowledge the request for letters of marque combined with the South's deteriorating

military fortunes only exacerbated the erosion of the southern sympathizers' privateering dreams. In 1864 Governor Douglas was replaced, and the new governor, Arthur Kennedy, proved more cooperative when enforcing British neutrality and discouraging the clandestine schemes of Victoria's southern element. Within a few months of the change in governorship, Francis reported, "It is gratifying to notice the change in the sentiment of the English people here in regard to our Government and its effort to put down the rebellion."<sup>70</sup>

Although the Confederacy was in decline by late 1864, a few ardent members of the Southern Association continued to meet in Shapard's bar. There they talked about attacking U.S. commercial interests on the Pacific. However, in November the ubiquitous Consul Francis confidently informed the new Department of the Pacific commander, Major General Irvin McDowell, that "Governor Kennedy will do all in his power to prevent them from fitting out any vessel on this island."<sup>71</sup> In 1865 the Southern Association's continual scheming fell silent when even the most ardent southern sympathizers realized their larger cause was lost.

By 1865 diplomatic relations between the United States and Great Britain had improved since the early days of the war. For the Department of the Pacific and the Pacific Squadron, interactions with the British on Vancouver Island and on the waters off the Pacific Northwest coast were relaxed, and in some cases even cordial. With the new royal governor on Vancouver Island proving more amenable in allaying U.S. concerns about southern sympathizers, and not harboring any expansionist dreams like his predecessor, the only problems that remained were on San Juan Island, the site of the 1859 Pig War. Those minor frictions were caused by the confusion over police authority, a point that both U.S. and British military personnel took great pains to work out together.

In the end, British forces never crossed the far western American border, nor did Confederate forces or southern sympathizers successfully use Vancouver Island or British Columbia as a base of operations for attacks on the United States during the Civil War. The danger was genuine, and the potential damage to the Union effort significant—successful attacks on the gold shipments alone might have prolonged the war. The failure of these threats to the Union conveys the false impression that no danger ever existed for the Union cause from Vancouver Island or British Columbia. As the Pig War demonstrated, conflict could be just a hair's breadth away. That no threat succeeded is a testament to the multilayered efforts of the Department of the

Pacific on land and the vessels of the Pacific Squadron—skillfully aided by U.S. Consul Allen Francis on Vancouver Island, who seemingly knew all of the dangers before they materialized. These efforts kept Governor Douglas from causing a political row and prevented southern sympathizers from attacking Union interests in the Pacific Northwest. Only because of such machinations was the Pacific Northwest a quiet theater of the U.S. Civil War.

## NOTES

1. Sir James Douglas was royal governor of both Vancouver Island and British Columbia colonies.
2. Bruce Hutchinson, *The Struggle for the Border* (Toronto, New York, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1955), 333. For the Chesapeake seizure, also see Greg Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), chaps. 6 and 7.
3. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1896), series 1, 3: 352–54. All other references to the naval records of the war are for series 1, unless otherwise noted, and are cited as *ORN*.
4. For the St. Albans Raid see Stuart Lutz, "Terror in St. Albans," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, 40 (2001): 3.
5. James Polk had been a relative unknown prior to the 1844 presidential, therefore his aggressive expansionist stance played a key role in launching him out of obscurity.
6. Paul H. Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1987), 117.
7. Frederick Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansion* (New York: Vintage, 1966), 73. Merk points out that President Tyler and the lame duck House of Representatives pushed "All Oregon" legislation—meaning to the northern extreme of the Canadian portion of Oregon—but that it died, as expected, in the Senate.
8. *Ibid.*, 78; Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk*, 119–20.
9. Treatment of the final phase of the Oregon crisis can be found in Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk*, 124–13, Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansion*, 102–3, and William H. Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed* (New York, London, Sydney: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 47–48.
10. Information on the origins of the Pig War can be found in Keith A. Murray, *The Pig War* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1968), 32–33.
11. Keith A. Murray, "Pig War Letters: A Romantic Lieutenant's Account of the San Juan Crisis," *Columbia* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 17.
12. For Pickett see Leslie J. Gordon's *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) and for Harney see



George Rollie Anderson's *General William S. Harney: Prince of Dragoons* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

13. Granville O. Haller, *San Juan and Secession* (Seattle, WA: Shorey Book Store, 1967; original publication date, 1896), 12.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Royal Governor James Douglas to Lord Lytton, British Colonial Secretary, August 1, 1859. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846–71, digitized by the University of Victoria (bcgenesis.uvic.ca). Hereafter cited as Colonial Despatches.

16. Murray, "Pig War Letters," 17.

17. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1897), 50: 1, 512. Hereafter cited as *OR*. The abandonment of the American post on San Juan island, as directed from the department headquarters, is given in District Special Order 9, dated June 11, 1861.

18. Beginning in 1848 the Pacific Northwest was the site of the following wars: Cayuse War (Oregon), Yakima War (Washington Territory), Rogue River War (Oregon), Puget Sound War (Washington Territory), and finally culminating with the Palouse War (Washington Territory).

19. Robin W. Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960), 158.

20. Benjamin F. Gilbert, "Rumors of Confederate Privateers Operating in Victoria, Vancouver Island," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 18 (1954) 3/4, 241. Douglas to Duke of Newcastle, Colonial Secretary, December 28, 1861. Colonial Despatches.

21. Douglas to Newcastle, December 28, 1861. Colonial Despatches.

22. *Ibid.*

23. On November 8, 1861, the U.S.S. *San Jacinto* stopped the British ship R.M.S. *Trent* in international waters and took two Confederate diplomats who were on their way to England and France into custody. The fact that the ship was both British and in international waters fueled anti-Union sentiment in England. To avoid any potential rupture in Anglo–Union relations, the Lincoln administration quickly disavowed the actions taken by the *San Jacinto's* captain, Charles Wilkes, and released the two Confederate diplomats. Dean B. Mahin, *One War at a Time* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2000), 58–82.

24. Winks, *Canada and the United States*, 162.

25. D. W. Higgins, *The Mystic Spring and Other Tales of Western Life* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1904), 107.

26. Allen Francis to William H. Seward, October 1, 1862. Dispatches from the United States Consuls in Victoria, 1862–1906 (microfilm, roll 1, 1862–1869). National Archives, Seattle branch. Hereafter cited as Dispatches US Consul.

27. According to congressional documents cited in Aurora Hunt, *Army of the Pacific* (1951; Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2004), 329.

28. Douglas was born in 1803 in Demerara, then a Dutch Colony in South America (and now part of Guyana), to a Scottish father and a Barbadian mother.

His wife was the daughter of his former boss at the North West (fur) Company. Early Douglas biographies ignored his racial background, choosing not to mention it at all. For a contemporary biography see John Adams, *Old Square Toes and His Lady: The Life of James and Amelia Douglas* (Victoria, BC: Horsdal and Schubert, 2001).

29. Patricia M. Johnson, "McCreight and the Law," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1948) 2: 138.

30. For the role played by Abraham Lincoln's close friends in Oregon country politics on the eve of the Civil War see, Richard Etulain, *Lincoln and Oregon Country Politics in the Civil War Era* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013). Chapter 2 is especially useful for understanding the relationship between Lincoln and Edward Baker and Simeon Francis, however, there is no information on the younger (Allen) Francis.

31. Biographical information on Allen and Simeon Francis comes from Jacob Piatt Dunn and William Harris Kemper, *Indiana and Indians: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood* (Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1919), 3: 1505–6.

32. Donald F. McLarney, "The American Civil War in Victoria, Vancouver Island Colony," unpublished paper, Highline (Washington) Community College, 7–9, and, *OR*, 50, 2: 678–79, 682.

33. *OR*, 50, 2: 682.

34. Although Francis never mentioned the names of any of his operatives, Victoria *Chronicle* editor D. W. Higgins wrote that Francis told him one of them was Dick Lovell, who helped thwart the plan to capture the *Schubrick*. Higgins, *The Mystic Spring*, 123–24. Writer Ken Mather asserted that Lovell was beaten by the southern conspirators for revealing their plans in time for them to be thwarted. Ken Mather, *Buckaroos and Mud Pups: The Early Days of Ranching in British Columbia* (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2006), 38.

35. Allen Francis to William H. Seward, October 10, 1862. Dispatches US Consul.

36. *Ibid.* The Jeffreys brothers began running cattle herds from Oregon to British Columbia in 1858 and appear to have taken up residence in Victoria after their 1862 herd was delivered. F. W. Laing, "Some Pioneers of the Cattle Industry," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1942): 260.

37. *Ibid.*, 111.

38. Allen Francis to William H. Seward, October 1, 1862, Dispatches US Consul.

39. McLarney, "The American Civil War in Victoria," 17–19. Governor Douglas letter to Francis enclosed in Francis to Seward, November 13, 1862. Dispatches US Consul.

40. McLarney, "The American Civil War in Victoria," 20–21.

41. Quoting Pickering to Seward, July 5, 1864, *Territorial Papers, Washington Series*, in *Ibid.*, 43.

42. *Ibid.*, 31.

43. *OR*, 50, 2: 678.
44. *Ibid.*, 37 and 38.
45. *Victoria Daily British Colonist*, April 12, 1865.
46. Gilbert, "Rumors of Confederate Privateers Operating in Victoria," 241. For the *Colonist's* reaction see their February 5, 1863, issue.
47. *Ibid.*, 242–43.
48. Charles Prosch, *Reminiscences of Washington Territory* (1904; Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1969), 52.
49. *ORN*, 2: 258.
50. Francis to Seward, February 14, 1863. Dispatches US Consul.
51. Higgins, *The Mystic Spring*, 124.
52. *OR*, 50, 2: 352.
53. *ORN*, 2: 122. For General Wright's version of events, see *OR*, 50, 2: 363–64.
54. Seward to Lyons, March 31, 1863. *House Executive Documents*, 1, 38th Congress, 1st Session: 1, 535.
55. *Ibid.*
56. In reality, Brigadier General Benjamin Alvord, District of Oregon commander, had been more vocal in his calls for a stronger naval presence in Puget Sound—and at the mouth of the Columbia River. He sent his first request for naval reinforcement to the Secretary of the Navy in September 1862. *OR*, 50, 2: 96.
57. *ORN*, 2: 165.
58. *Ibid.*, 261.
59. *Ibid.*, 260. The letters of marque were official documentation that proved that those privateers holding the letters were operating on behalf of a specified government—the Confederacy in this case—and were therefore not pirates, but sanctioned military forces. Essentially, it legalized piracy, as long as the captured ships went before an admiralty court in the country that issued the letters.
60. David was hoping the Confederate government would authorize him and his fellow plotters to launch raids on Union commerce in the Pacific Ocean.
61. *ORN*, 3: 1, 934.
62. *Ibid.*
63. The consul could have written to either General Alvord or Alvord's superior, department commander General Wright, or the senior naval officers—Pacific Squadron leader Admiral Charles Bell or Captain Thomas Selfridge at Mare Island.
64. *OR*, 50, 2: 678.
65. *Ibid.*, 679–80.
66. *Ibid.*, 714.
67. *Ibid.*, 684.
68. Gilbert, *British Columbia Historical Review*, 252; *ORN*, 2: 574.
69. *OR*, 50: 2, 789.
70. Francis to Seward, March 4, 1865. Dispatches US Consul.
71. *OR*, 50: 2, 1061.