



Peace Over War

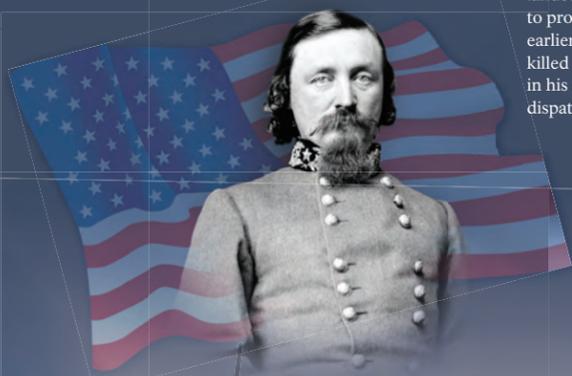
In 1846 when the Oregon Treaty was signed, the United States and Great Britain thought they had ended their differences over a vast territory known as the Oregon Country. The treaty set the 49th parallel as the boundary between the two nations. But the treaty was ambiguous about which side of the San Juan Islands the boundary fell. (It referenced a strait, but there are two straits.) To keep peace, the nations tabled a decision, but the unresolved issue festered.

A squabble over a pig in 1859 on San Juan Island nearly sparked war between the United States and Great Britain. At the heart of the spat was the island's rightful ownership. After 12 years of peaceful, joint military occupation on the island, the British bowed out, accepting a German arbitrator's decision in favor of the United States.

OREGON COUNTRY
Combined British and U.S. Territory
before the 49th parallel boundary was set.

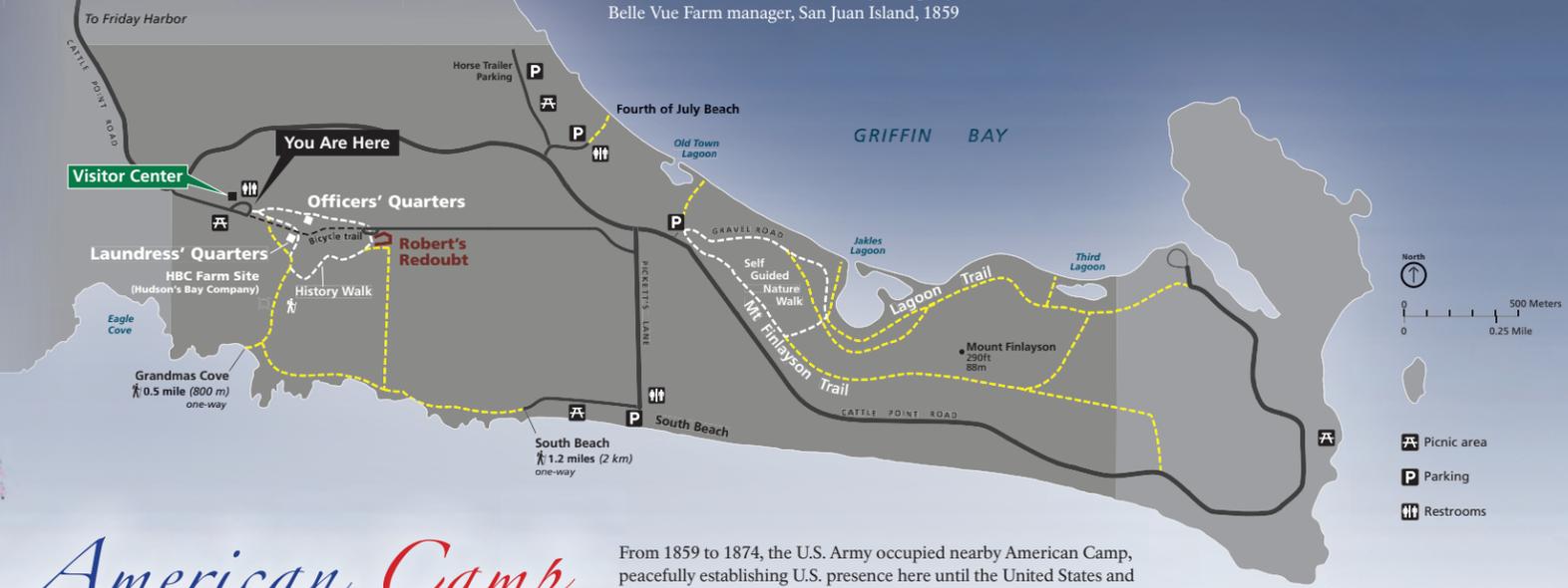


Capt. George E. Pickett and his 66-man unit landed on the island July 27, 1859, under orders to protect the U.S. settlers there. A few weeks earlier, American Lyman Cutlar had shot and killed a Hudson's Bay Company pig rooting in his garden. Tempers flared, and Pickett was dispatched as a show of force.



There are now upwards of 16 squatters . . . on various parts of the island, all claiming to be Citizens of the United States and they have one and all taken up claims.

Charles Griffin, Hudson's Bay Company's Belle Vue Farm manager, San Juan Island, 1859



American Camp

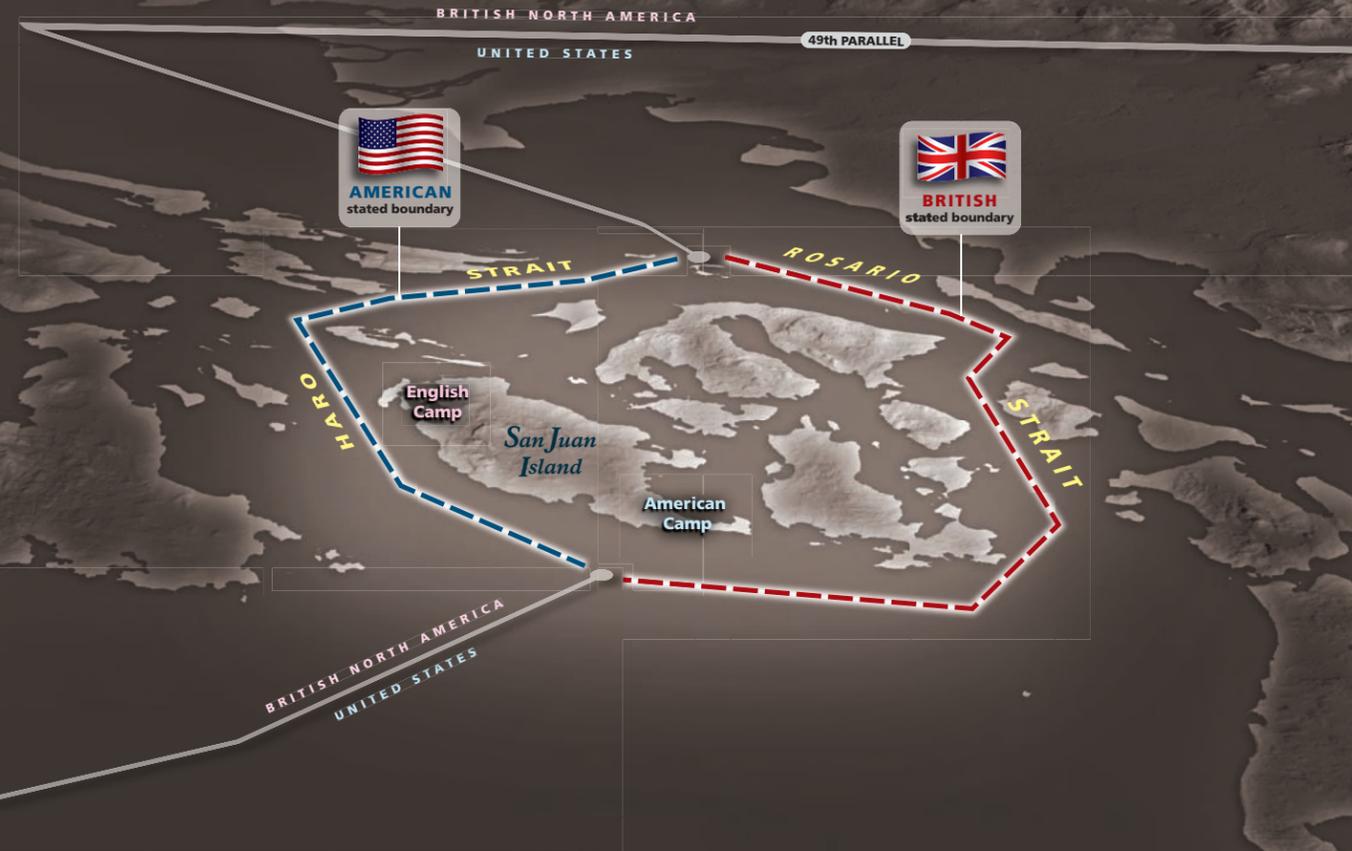
From 1859 to 1874, the U.S. Army occupied nearby American Camp, peacefully establishing U.S. presence here until the United States and Great Britain could resolve the rightful ownership of San Juan Island. No shots were ever fired in battle. No lives were ever lost in war.





Disputed Boundary

The Oregon Treaty of 1846 set the 49th parallel as the boundary between British Columbia and the Washington Territory. But once the demarcation line hit the Pacific Coast, ambiguity set in. Had the treaty negotiators—thousands of miles removed—consulted Pacific Northwest sailors they would have known that two major channels—Haro and Rosario Straits—led to the greater Strait of Juan De Fuca. Instead the treaty described the line to the Pacific as “middle of the channel.” “Middle of *which* channel?” became the dispute, “Haro or Rosario?”



Events that led to joint occupation in 1859

1846 Oregon Treaty signed, but inadvertently leaves ownership of San Juan Island in dispute

1851 Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sets up a fishing station on the island

1853 HBC's Charles Griffin establishes Belle Vue Sheep Farm there

1854 U.S. Customs Collector assigned to the island; the British threaten to arrest him

Whatcom County Sheriff tries to collect tax from Belle Vue Sheep Farm

1855 Sheriff returns and seizes 39 Belle Vue rams for the \$80.33 assessed tax

1856 U.S. and Great Britain appoint commission to survey disputed boundary

1858 Six British sailors steal a keg of rum from the U.S. Customs Inspector

1859 Americans—called squatters by the British—arrive in numbers on the island

1859 American settler shoots a Belle Vue Sheep Farm pig rooting in his garden



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Oregon Country
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Naval Capt. Geoffrey P. Hornby led the British standoff against American Capt. George E. Pickett and his 66-man unit, who landed on the island July 27, 1859. Hornby was pushed by British Columbia Governor Douglas to take action, but instead stood calm and awaited his Admiral's orders. Rear Adm. R. Lambert Baynes refused to involve his Queen in a war over a pig. Instead he stood fast on naval policy: to fire only if fired upon.

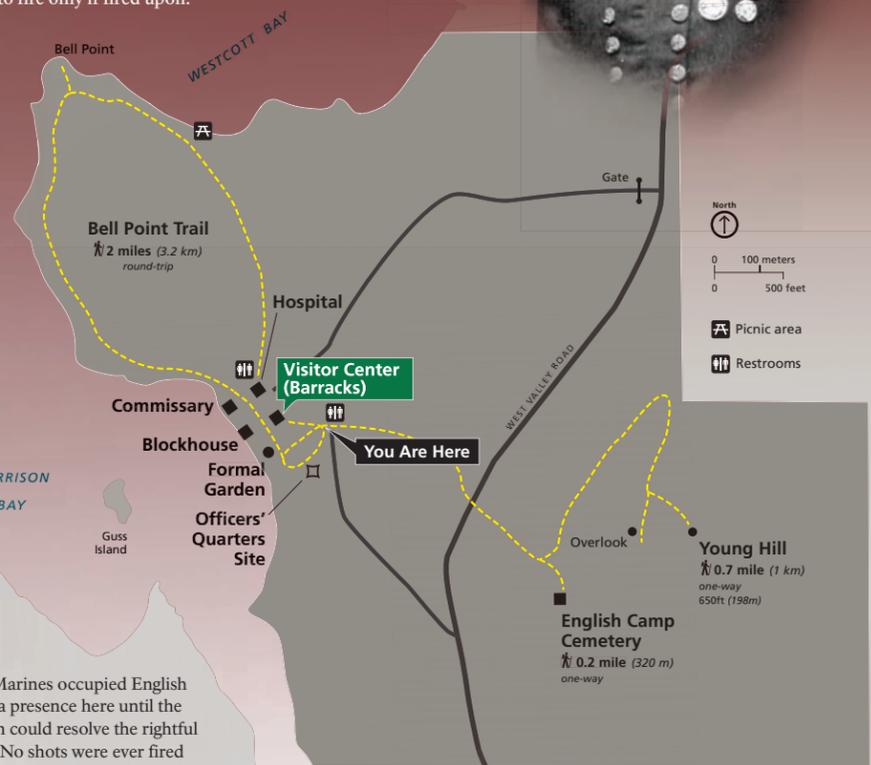


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Charles Griffin, Hudson's Bay Company's Belle Vue Farm manager, San Juan Island, 1859

English Camp

From 1860 to 1872 the Royal Marines occupied English Camp, peacefully establishing a presence here until the United States and Great Britain could resolve the rightful ownership of San Juan Island. No shots were ever fired in battle. No lives were ever lost in war.





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