

## SAN JUAN ISLAND IN THE CIVIL WAR

There are about eighty reports, letters and mentions of San Juan Island in the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I., Volume Fifty, parts I. and II., which comprise 2,463 pages.

In the fifty to one hundred pages devoted to San Juan are a number of matters which are valuable for students of Washington history, while much is merely of military routine.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Fort Pickett was ordered abandoned. This order was rescinded, on account of this post being "of national importance." The boundary dispute was then unsettled, and British and American garrisons were stationed on the Island. (See Part I., pages 512, 514, 519, 519, 521, 521, 529.)

Captain George Bazalgette was in command of the British military forces throughout this five-year period, while the American officers were constantly changed, which was the cause of much of the difficulty. The American officers were Captain George E. Pickett, afterwards prominent at Gettysburg; Captain T. C. English, who subsequently figured in the Washington Territorial forces; Lieutenant Augustus G. Robinson, Captain Lyman Bissell, and Lieutenant Michael J. Fitzgerald. (See Part I., pages 429, 434, 526, 544, 544, 619, 673, 685, 701, 741, 752, 793, 801, 870, 895, 1136, 1168; Part II., pages 272, 506, 712, 884, 1110, 1188, 1273, 1290.)

Among the names of prominent men mentioned are Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War; C. A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War; Governor William Pickering, of Washington; Governor James Douglas, of British Columbia; General Henry W. Halleck, General Winfield Scott, General Richard C. Drum, General Irvin McDowell, General Albert Sidney Johnston, General Benjamin Alvord and Colonel George Wright.

Although the fear of international complications lay behind all the difficulties, yet the relations between the British and American military forces were always harmonious and amicable. (See Part I., pages 435, 445, 448; Part II., pages 435, 472.)

By mutual agreement, each military force laid off a reservation to include only as much land as was needed for military purposes, for the comfort and discipline of the troops. (See Part I., pages 434, 445, 448, 449; and Part II., pages 435, 472.)

At first there was a mutual division of the Island, practically

creating an international boundary, which was the cause of most of the trouble. (See Part II., pages 343, 382, 472, 477, 554; citing in a footnote: Sen. Doc. 10, January 30, 1860, p. 64; House Doc. 98, June 20, 1860; Article in *Edinburgh Review*, April 1864, which gives the British side of the San Juan controversy.)

The unsettled conditions appear to have attracted a number of lawless men, who sold liquor to the Indians and to the soldiers, committed many depredations, and did not recognize civil nor military law. (See Part II., pages 402, 403, 435, 436, 438.)

The British officers had authority, which they effectively exercised; while at first the American officers did not have authority. Later they were granted the same powers as the British, with authority to expel disturbers. (See Part II., pages 403, 404, 434, 435, 440, 443, 463, 476.)

Many interesting matters centered around the relations between the United States military authorities and the civil officers. There appear to have been about one hundred settlers. Of these about twenty were British and an equal number Sandwich Islanders, who did not give trouble. Of the Americans there were some opposed to the military, some friendly toward them, and a few neutral.

There appears to have been no provision for a land office, and while the Act of Congress, March 2, 1853, organizing Washington Territory, had ordered that Justices of the Peace should have no jurisdiction in cases where the title to land was involved, yet the justices undertook to settle such cases. (See Part II., pages 435, 474, 628, etc.)

In one case a Justice of the Peace summoned a British citizen for trespass in a matter of a disputed land claim, and when he did not appear, the case was tried in his absence; and decided in favor of the American claimant. The case was tried in a bar room, with men smoking, drinking and playing cards while the trial was being held.

Steps were thereupon taken to eject the British citizen by force, when the American military officials interfered. In addition to sending soldiers to protect the British citizen, the officer in command adopted the rather startling expedient of suspending the civil official. There was a meeting of part of the American settlers, who passed resolutions unfriendly toward the American officer, and apparently intimating that they should protect American land claimants by force. Another group of American citizens passed resolutions of approval of the military, and both sides wrote to the superior officials, which resulted in considerable correspondence.

(See Part II., pages 343, 381, 401, 402, 403, 404, 434, 436, 439 to 444, 463, 472, 477.)

The sheriff undertook to exercise his authority, and complained of a lack of co-operation from the military, but he did not obtain much satisfaction. (See Part II., pages 553, 554, 626, 627, 632.)

Finally General Irvin McDowell and Governor William Pickering visited the Island. The Governor decided not to appoint any more Justices, while General McDowell objected to the division of the Island. His order was: "The authority to be exercised is not as to territory, for that is the matter at issue, but as to individuals, and on the part of each military commander, so far as his countrymen are concerned, extends over the whole island." This decision was approved by the higher authorities of the United States. (See Part II., pages 928, 972, 1122, 1141.)

The records do not indicate the attitude of the British to this decision, which affected them, but in regard to which they were not consulted. There is equal uncertainty as to the result of the disputed land claims. Many of the letters and reports are very interesting, and well worth reading.

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