

- British Columbia prior to the 1800s: there were no roads, boundary lines, bridges, or ferries. The territory was inhabited by 80 000 to 100 000 First Nations people.
- During the 19th century, the area was home to an intense and lucrative fur trade.
- 1819 – the British & American governments agreed that the boundary separating their territories would be set at 49° N latitude (aka 49th parallel).
- What remained was the region between the Rockies & the Pacific Ocean, called the **Oregon Territory**. The United States & Britain both wanted to use the Oregon Territory to their advantage.
- The HBC was already operating in the region & had no real interest in encouraging settlement, since they preferred to leave the region open for the rich fur trade.
- The USA actively encouraged people from the eastern states to move to the area. Most settled south of the Columbia River near what is now Portland, Oregon.

The HBC in the Oregon Territory

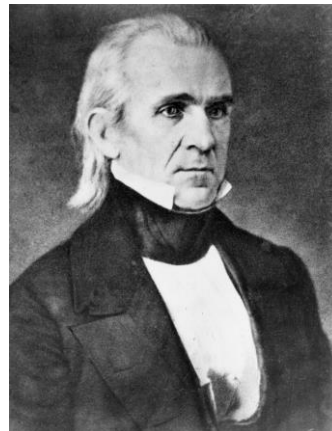
- 1824 – HBC decided to build Fort Vancouver to make better use of the resources there. **John McLoughlin** was put in charge of Ft. Vancouver. He tried to limit the American presence in the area by helping new settlers go south of the Columbia river. By the end of the 1830s, there was a strong American presence there.
- The HBC did have competition from the Russians coming from Alaska. By 1839 the HBC & Russians had made a deal to work together.
- 1841 – George Simpson arrived in the area & closed many of the HBC forts. McLoughlin was furious that 15 years of hard work was undone.

An Official Boundary

- Rising population in Oregon alerted the HBC & USA that a permanent boundary was needed. If the 49th parallel was used then Ft. Vancouver would be in American territory.
- 1843 – Fort Victoria is founded on Vancouver Island.
- 1844 – **James Polk** won the United States presidential election, in part because of his campaign slogan: “**54 40 or fight.**” Polk wanted to obtain all of the Oregon Territory up to its northern boundary of 54° 40' N latitude.
- However, despite his tough talk, Polk never intended to go to war with the British Empire.
- Negotiations in 1845 and 1846 simply extended the 49th parallel boundary west, with one exception—all of Vancouver Island remained in British hands.
- Fort Vancouver and the HBC’s farms on Puget Sound were now in American territory, which was a loss for the company.



John McLoughlin



James Polk