The Pig War:
Confrontation, Escalation,
Arbitration

Alan Zhou, Kyler Wang
Junior Division
Group Documentary
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We learned about the Pig War after watching a YouTube video titled “The Dumbest Wars Ever Fought.” The thumbnail depicted a row of bold red font reading “THE PIG WAR!?” above a man pretending to be a pig. After looking into it further, we realized that it was fitting for the upcoming National History Day contest: it was not only interesting, but also related to the theme of conflict and compromise. We decided to dig deeper.

We first found a few books, such as The Pig War: Standoff at Griffin Bay by Mike Vouri, the foremost expert on the Pig War in the United States. We also purchased a book titled The Pig War: Images of America, a compilation of 200 primary-source photographs relating to the Pig War. Later, we contacted the curators at Oregon Historical Society, who relayed their opinions on the topic. We visited their research library, which contained many primary sources such as original letters, manuscripts, etc. They also connected us with former PSU Professor Bill Lang, whom we interviewed. We also reached out to the staff at San Juan Island National Historical Park, where the Pig War occurred. The park’s Chief of Interpretation, Brandon Cadwell, helped us understand the event more thoroughly through an online interview. He pointed us to their website, which contained many primary source documents, journals, and photographs. We used this information to create our bibliography and script. Citing and reviewing sources taught us the researching process that historians use.

We chose to make a documentary because we had prior video-editing experience and felt like it was the most engaging out of the four categories. Because the Pig War took place between the eras of painting and photography, we could use both to portray the event. We ensured the script portrayed the story accurately and conveyed our thesis. After recording the voice-over script, we
began creating the documentary using Final Cut Pro X. We compiled photographs, interviews, voice-over and musical score, creating an eloquent and engaging documentary about the Pig War and its results.

Contrary to what the makers of the original YouTube video believed, the Pig War was not one of “the dumbest wars ever fought”. It showed how a small incident, like the shooting of a pig, can quickly escalate into a full-scale military confrontation. But most importantly, it proved that conflicts could be solved by arbitration. The Pig War ended because the US and Britain decided to compromise by allowing a neutral third-party, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, to resolve the issue. This method of compromising was revolutionary, and was used in many later conflicts such as the Alaska Boundary Dispute. It led to the creation of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 1899, which currently works to resolve issues such as the South China Sea disputes and Croatia-Slovenia border conflicts. Arbitration is a compromising strategy that will be used for centuries to come, all because the British and Americans were able to compromise in order to resolve the Pig War.
Annotated Bibliography

Research Resources

Primary Sources:

This letter, from Secretary of State John Quincy Adams to President James Monroe, discusses the Adams-Onis Treaty, the treaty that ended Spanish claim on Oregon Country. Understanding the Adams-Onis Treaty helped us understand that the Pig War and the Treaty of Washington were the last in a series of border disputes and compromises. This letter was also used in our documentary, accompanying our voice-over.

Bowen & Co., and Whiteman & Co. “Map Showing the Line of Boundary between the United States & British Possessions [Cartographic Material] : from the Point Where the 49th Parallel of North Latitude Strikes the Western Coast of the Continent 'to the Middle of the Channel Which Separates the Continent from Vancouver's Island and Thence Southerly through the Middle of Said Channel' &c. to Fuca's Straits, in Accordance with Treaty of June 15th, 1846.” Map Showing the Line of Boundary between the United States & British Possessions [Cartographic Material] : from the Point Where the 49th Parallel of North Latitude Strikes the Western Coast of the Continent "to the Middle of the Channel Which Separates the Continent from Vancouver's Island and Thence Southerly through the Middle of Said Channel" &c. to Fuca's Straits, in Accordance with Treaty of June 15th, 1846., Philadelphia : Bowen & Co., 1846.

We found this map at the Oregon Historical Society Archives. It was created shortly after the signing of the Oregon Treaty, and explains the unclear wording that later resulted in the Pig War. This shows that the signers of the Oregon Treaty knew that the problem
existed, as did many Americans -- but they decided to ignore it anyway. It shows how a mistake in the Oregon Treaty compromise resulted in the Pig War conflict.

Cass, Lewis. “General Cass to Mr. Dallas : (Communicated to Lord J. Russell by Mr. Dallas, November 12). Received by Alexander Dallas, Oregon Historical Society, London: Foreign Office, 17 Nov. 1859.

This is the Oregon Historical Society’s copy of a letter by Gen. Lewis Cass to Alexander Dallas, dated October 20, 1859, regarding the San Juan Islands Boundary Dispute. This letter was written a few months after the joint occupation began, when the issue was still of high importance to both governments. As a result, it showed the frustration that they felt about the dispute. It was originally confidential, printed for the use of the British Foreign Office. The OHS copy is signed by Right Honorable Sidney Herbert, M.P..

Dallas, Alexander G. “Alexander G. Dallas Letter to Charles Griffin [Manuscript], 1859 July 28.” Received by Charles Griffin, Oregon Historical Society Davies Family Research Library, 28 July 1859, Portland, Oregon.

This is a copy of a letter from Alexander G. Dallas, Victoria, British Columbia, to Charles Griffin, San Juan Island. The letter, sent July 28, 1859 (about a month after the shooting of the pig), urged Griffin to lodge a complaint against a thief before Major De Courcy. It showed us the animosity between the British and the Americans on the island.


This is a bound collection of printed documents and maps regarding the arbitration after the Pig War. It includes the arguments and counterarguments that Great Britain and United States sent to each other and the arbiters. This collection, though sometimes cryptic, conveyed important information about the compromise that solved the Pig War. It also included some information about the Pig War itself.


This book included all letters sent to and from Great Britain during the first few months of the occupation of the island. It showed us the feelings of both sides during the
most tense months of the dispute. The Oregon Historical Society’s copy is signed by Right Hon. Sidney Herbert, M.P.


This book, published by the United States Print Office in Washington D.C. in 1860, includes correspondence between General Harney and the United States Government. These letters offered a window into Harney’s life, and allowed us to think about if Harney provoked the Pig War for personal benefit.

Himes, George H. *Scrapbook.* 1895.

This scrapbook, created by George Himes, the first curator of the Oregon Historical Society, included pictures of San Juan and remains from the Pig War. It revealed that the Pig War had a large influence of the island, increasing the population significantly.


This was a record of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s possessory rights in 1849, after the Oregon Treaty of 1846. It includes records from various members of the Hudson’s Bay Company. The record showed us the extent and influence of the HBC upon the Oregon Country prior to the Oregon Treaty.

Johnson, Andrew, and United States. *State Dept. Message of the President of the United States, Communicating, in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate of December 18, 1867, Information in Relation to the Occupation of the Island of San Juan, in Puget Sound: February 22, 1868, Read, Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, and Ordered to Be Printed.* S.l.: G.P.O., 1868.
This book, compiled by the 2nd Session of the 40th Congress, was used to brief government officials on the San Juan Island incident after the Civil War. The original document was signed and dated by Andrew Johnson on February 20, 1868.


This map, published in 1865 and currently held in the Oregon Historical Society’s archives, shows the boundaries claimed by Great Britain and the United States and the proposed compromise in the San Juan Island during the Pig War. The map key clearly explained to us the different boundaries were clearly explained.


This political cartoon, drawn by Thomas Nast, depicts the Treaty of Washington. Because political cartoons often reveal the public’s view, it helped us understand how the American people felt about it.


This compilation of speeches on the Oregon Question was confidential and printed for the use of the first session of the 29th Congress. It was read on June 17, 1846 in the Senate chamber, two days after the Treaty of Oregon’s signing. It showed us the interpretations of American politicians on the Treaty of Oregon, revealing that most believed San Juan was part of the U.S.

This memorandum was originally confidential, printed for the use of the British Foreign Office. This memorandum explained the Britain’s perspective on the San Juan Question in the months following the beginning of the incident. It also explains one of the reasons that the San Juan Question never resulted in war; although many Americans were bellicose (like General Harney), members of the British government and army were more peaceable.


This was a manuscript written by George Simpson, the HBC’s administrator at the height of its power. Understanding the Hudson’s Bay Company is vital to understanding Oregon Country before the signing of the Oregon Treaty of 1846. It also helps explain the Anglo-American tension along the border.


Pages 13 and 14 of this copy of the *New York Herald* discussed the Berlin arbitration used to solve the Pig War. The newspaper showed us that even though the event is not well-known today, it was a relatively large event at the time of the event. The newspaper also showed us the positive perspective that the general public held after the arbitration.

This Senate executive document was an act to make Oregon a territory of the United States. This document showed the importance of the Treaty of Oregon, passed two years before this bill was signed into action.


The correspondence in this book included letters between William Seward, Secretary of State; Archibald Campbell, United States Commissioner; and James Prevost, Great Britain Commissioner. It includes a report from Seward, a discussion of the San Juan Island Question, and diplomatic correspondence. It gave us important primary information on all parts of the Pig War.


This series included 3 volumes of letters, maps, and executive documents. The books were originally released as House executive documents. The first volume was written about the state papers and correspondences between officials, the second about the Berlin Arbitration, and the third was a compilation of maps relevant to the San Juan Island Question. These letters and documents gave us an insight into what people involved in the Pig War were thinking, and how they ultimately chose arbitration to resolve it.


Only the image was used from this source. This image, from the Oregon Historical Society, was a notification that one family received after registering for land under the Oregon Land Donation Claim. It gave a closer look at the migration to Oregon by showing the notification all of them were given when arriving.

This is a map of the part of Oregon Country including Vancouver’s Island. It was originally a Senate Executive Document from the 2nd session of the 32nd Congress. It was printed in 1852 from Surveyor General’s Office in Oregon City. The map gave us information about post-Oregon Treaty discussion of


This book is a compilation of 200 primary source images relevant to the Pig War. It includes pictures of the landscape, portraits of important figures, army camps, and more. The compiler and annotator, Mike Vouri, was a park ranger at the San Juan Islands for over 20 years, and has written other books on the Pig War. These images were used frequently throughout the documentary because of their authenticity and relevance to the event. This book also had detailed explanations, giving us a deeper understanding of what happened.


This article was a collection of primary source maps with written annotations by the author. The maps helped us understand the causes of the Oregon boundary dispute. Because the Pig War was partially caused by lack of understanding of Oregon geography, these maps were vital to understanding the war itself.


One article in this newspaper discussed the actions of General Harney during the Pig War. The Secretary of War denounced his actions, stating that they were against the
orders of the U.S. government. This reinforces the perspective that General Harney was acting in his own self interest during the Pig War. This article presented us with the idea that General Harney may have been disobeying government orders to provoke a war.

**Secondary**


The doctrine of Manifest Destiny played a big role in the Treaty of Oregon of 1846. Despite President Polk’s promise of “fifty-four forty or fight,” Britain and the United States decided to compromise at the forty-ninth parallel. This article explained the annexation of Texas, giving us a deeper understanding of Manifest Destiny and the other land acquisitions the United States was making at the time.

Abi-Saab, Georges. “International Arbitration and Adjudication.”

This lecture comes from the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. It includes an in-depth explanation of international arbitration and analysis by Abi-Saab, an international judge and professor of international law.


We interviewed Brandon Cadwell, the current Chief of Interpretation for San Juan Island National Historical Park. As a San Juan historian, he has access to many primary source documents and is surrounded by the Pig War’s legacy everyday. He was very knowledgeable and gave a unique perspective on the events. We used the audio from the interview in our documentary.


This book was written by E.C. Coleman, a former British Royal Navy officer. He has written numerous books in the past about the Royal Navy and sea exploration. He has written a book about George Vancouver, one of the first white men to explore and map the area where the war was fought. Because this book was written from the point of view of a British officer, we were able to contrast the points of view in this book with those written by Americans. In addition, it has a very detailed account of the events
before, during, and after the Pig War. Since the author was from Britain, he had access to many primary documents that are not available in the United States, and was thus able to include information not found in American sources.

**Foote, Timothy.** "1846: The Way we were--and the Way we Went."

This article, originally published in the Smithsonian Magazine in 1996, was about the year 1846, the year the Treaty of Oregon was signed. It included information about President Polk, Manifest Destiny, and how the 49th parallel was established as the border.

**“General George Pickett Pig War, Dec 9 2013 | Video.” C-SPAN.org, C-Span, 9 Dec. 2013,**

This was a clip from a C-Span documentary about George Pickett and his role in the Pig War. It also included an interview of Mike Vouri, the foremost expert on the Pig War in the Pacific Northwest. We learned about Pickett’s role in the event through this documentary.


This article put the Pig War in context of the world at large. Because one of the reasons the conflict lasted for such a long time were other conflicts in the United States (like the Civil War and Reconstruction), this was important in understanding why the joint occupation lasted over 12 years.

**English Camp Remains, San Juan Island, Wash. Plans, Mss 3102, Oregon Historical Society Research Library**

This picture shows the English Camp on San Juan Island still standing years after the Pig War. Because photography was not yet commonly used at the time of the San Juan Island incident, this photograph was more clear than others, and gave us valuable information about the living conditions for the British soldiers on the island.
Haller, Granville Owen. *San Juan and Secession: Possible Relation to the War of the Rebellion: Did General Harney Try to Make Trouble with English to Aid the Conspiracy? A Careful Review of His Orders and the Circumstances Attending the Disputed Possessions During the Year 1859.* 1896.

This pamphlet questioned the actions of General William S. Harney during the San Juan Island Incident. Although we did not use the information from this pamphlet in the documentary, the Pig War may have happened because of Harney’s own self interest. Harney was very anti-British and a Southerner. According to the pamphlet, he thought that provoking a war would weaken Britain, help the South secede by causing a distraction, and make himself a war hero. It helped us understand a possible cause of the Pig War and Harney’s character.


This online magazine article was from the Historic UK British Magazine. Because the magazine is based in Britain, it was more focused on the British perspective than the American. This is important because the majority of our sources are American, and therefore Americentric.


We got in contact with Dr. Bill Lang through members of the Oregon Historical Society. As a longtime professor of Pacific Northwest History and founder of the Oregon Encyclopedia of History and Culture, he thoroughly understood historical events in the Oregon Territory. We conducted a 30-minute online interview with him, recording audio to put into our documentary and learning more about our topic.


This article was mostly about the mapping of the 49th parallel. It confirmed that the maps drawn by John Hawkins and Archibald Campbell were accurate, thus confirming that the signers of the Oregon Treaty of 1846 knew of the Haro and Juan de Fuca Straits. Before reading this article, we were unaware that the signers of the Oregon Treaty intentionally left out San Juan Island in the wording.

Ludwig Quidde discussed arbitration in his Nobel Lecture. Although he was against many of Kaiser Wilhelm II’s policies, he had a mixed view on arbitration. This Nobel Lecture discusses arbitration as a problem-solving method, showing us that although arbitration was an important step toward international peace, there are times when a normal court is preferable.


Unlike most of our sources, this book was not written from an American perspective, but a Canadian one. In addition to including valuable information, it had a map of the San Juan Islands. Like *The Pig War: Standoff at Griffin Bay* by Mike Vouri, it was credible and detailed. This book was also found at the Oregon Historical Society’s Research Library.


This book was recommended to us by former professor Bill Lang, whom we interviewed. It gave important information on the Pig War and was easily understandable. An expert on Pacific Northwest History, Keith Murray’s *The Pig War* was viewed as the authority on the Pig War for many decades.

This article was very clear and concise in its analysis of the verbiage used in the Treaty of Oregon. Onge, the author, is primarily a cartographer, and the article focused mostly on the geography in the area and included a few primary source maps from the Library of Congress.


This interview (not conducted by us) of Mike Vouri was informative and interesting. It included a 3D map of the area. Clips from it were also used in our documentary.

Shine, Gregory P. “Fort Vancouver.” The Oregon Encyclopedia, The Oregon Encyclopedia, oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/fort_vancouver/#.Wo8pMqinFPZ.

This article was written by Gregory Shine, Fort Vancouver Chief Ranger and recipient of the Pacific West Region Freeman Tilden Award. Because the Hudson’s Bay Company plays a large part in the Pig War, this article helped us understand its establishment in the area. Fort Vancouver was the Hudson’s Bay Company’s central fur trading post in Oregon Country. According to the company’s governor Sir George Simpson, “the great centre of the business of the west side of the Continent.” Reading about Fort Vancouver allowed us to recognize the strong hold that the Hudson’s Bay Company had in the area.


This article discusses, originally published in an academic journal in 1911, discusses the Oregon Treaty and Polk’s decision to sign it. As the title suggests, it explains how Britain and the United States compromised over the border.


The article was an overview of the Oregon Territory before the Oregon Treaty of 1846. Even though it was not completely relevant to the topic, we used it to understand
the underlying Anglo-American tension that existed because of the Oregon boundary dispute.


This article described the Venezuelan Boundary Dispute, another border conflict involving Britain and the United States. The conflict was solved through arbitration, proving that the compromise used in the Pig War was later used in future Anglo-American negotiation.


The author, Mike Vouri, is the foremost historian on The Pig War in the Pacific Northwest. He worked for over 20 years at San Juan National Park, and has written multiple books on the matter. We used this book because of its credibility and attention to detail. The book contains all there is to know about the Pig War, along with some analysis of its events. It gave us crucial knowledge about the topic that we could not have gotten otherwise.


This encyclopedia entry was used in contrast with the other encyclopedia entries because it was Canada-centric. It helped us understand the role of Canada in the Treaty of Washington’s negotiation and also gave us insight into the treaty’s impact on Canada. Since Canada became independent in 1867, the Pig War happened at the same time.


This was used to help us better understand the Washington Treaty. Although it did not go too much in depth about the treaty itself, it provided good background information
on the treaty’s influence and explained what led to its negotiation. It gave a big-picture look at the treaty.

**Images and Media**

**Primary**


This is an image of James K. Polk. Polk is famous for his expansionist policies and strong support for Manifest Destiny. The Treaty of Oregon, which caused the Pig War, was signed during his presidency.


This iconic painting of Manifest Destiny by John Ghast was used in our documentary as we discussed Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny explains the pre-gold rush migration to Oregon Country.


This painting was painted by Emanuel Leutze, the artist who created *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, in 1860, one year after the beginning of the Pig War. It celebrates westward expansion and Manifest Destiny.


The Library of Congress was one of our most commonly used resources for photographs and documents. Although we were unable to access some of the information because we could not be present there in real life, much of the content, especially the images, were available on the internet database.
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Wang, Zhou


This is a scan of the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which created the border at the 49th parallel. This was used to verify our facts during research, but mostly used for the visual content in our documentary because the text was difficult to read.


This photograph of the United States Capitol was taken in the same year that the Treaty of Oregon was signed, 1846. It was used in our documentary to help draw the viewers into the story.


This poster was used in our documentary to depict “The Great Rapprochement”, a period of time (1895–1915) when the diplomatic and economic interests of Britain and the United States united. This friendly political atmosphere was only made possible by events like the Pig War, when the two countries decided to resolve their difficulties peacefully through negotiation and arbitration.


This Revolutionary War-era painting depicts the death of General Hugh Mercer at the hands of the British. We used this imagery to represent Brig. Gen. Harney’s anglophobic beliefs, as some anti-British sentiment was left over in American society from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.


This is a map of the Oregon Territory created years before the signing of the Oregon Treaty of 1846. It helped us further understand the region and boundaries of
Oregon, which relates to our topic. We used this map a couple times in our documentary to provide visual representation and show the reader the geography of Oregon.

**Secondary**

**American Heroes Channel. “The Runaway Pig That Almost Started a War.”**
*YouTube, YouTube, 15 Mar. 2016,*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9MmEjH_sbY&feature=youtu.be.

This was a professionally made short video on The Pig War by an offshoot of the Discovery Channel. Several clips from it were used in our documentary because we were unable to recreate the scenes without professional equipment. These scenes worked to strengthen the story we were telling and gives the audience a visual representation of the argument between Charles Griffin and Lyman Cutlar that eventually escalated into the Pig War.

**Derickson, Evan. San Juan Island Locator Map. September 1, 2015.**
*Wikipedia Commons,*
commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Juan_Island_locator_map.svg#filelinks.

This is an image of the San Juan Islands on a map. We used it as a visual during the documentary because of its clarity and simplicity. It helped viewers understand better what was going on in the area, and clearly depicted the boundary dispute in the area.


This is a painting by Forestier depicting the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. The Treaty of Ghent decided that joint occupation of the Oregon territory by Britain and the United States would be allowed. In the documentary, it accompanied our explanation of the joint occupation.

This image was during the documentary as we talked about migration to Oregon Country. The Conestoga Wagon is a representation of the Oregon Trail, which was one of the most common ways that Americans migrated from the east.


This map shows the different claims that United States and Britain had on Oregon territory before the Treaty of Oregon of 1846. It offers a visual to our explanation during the documentary.


This map shows the different claims that countries had on United States land at the start of the 19th century. It accompanies our introduction of Oregon Country in the pre-Pig War era.


This image shows the different boundaries that Britain and the United States wanted to be the border. It accompanies our explanation of the border dispute during the documentary.