

EDWARD EVERETT AND THE OREGON QUESTION: A STUDY IN PERSONAL
DIPLOMACY

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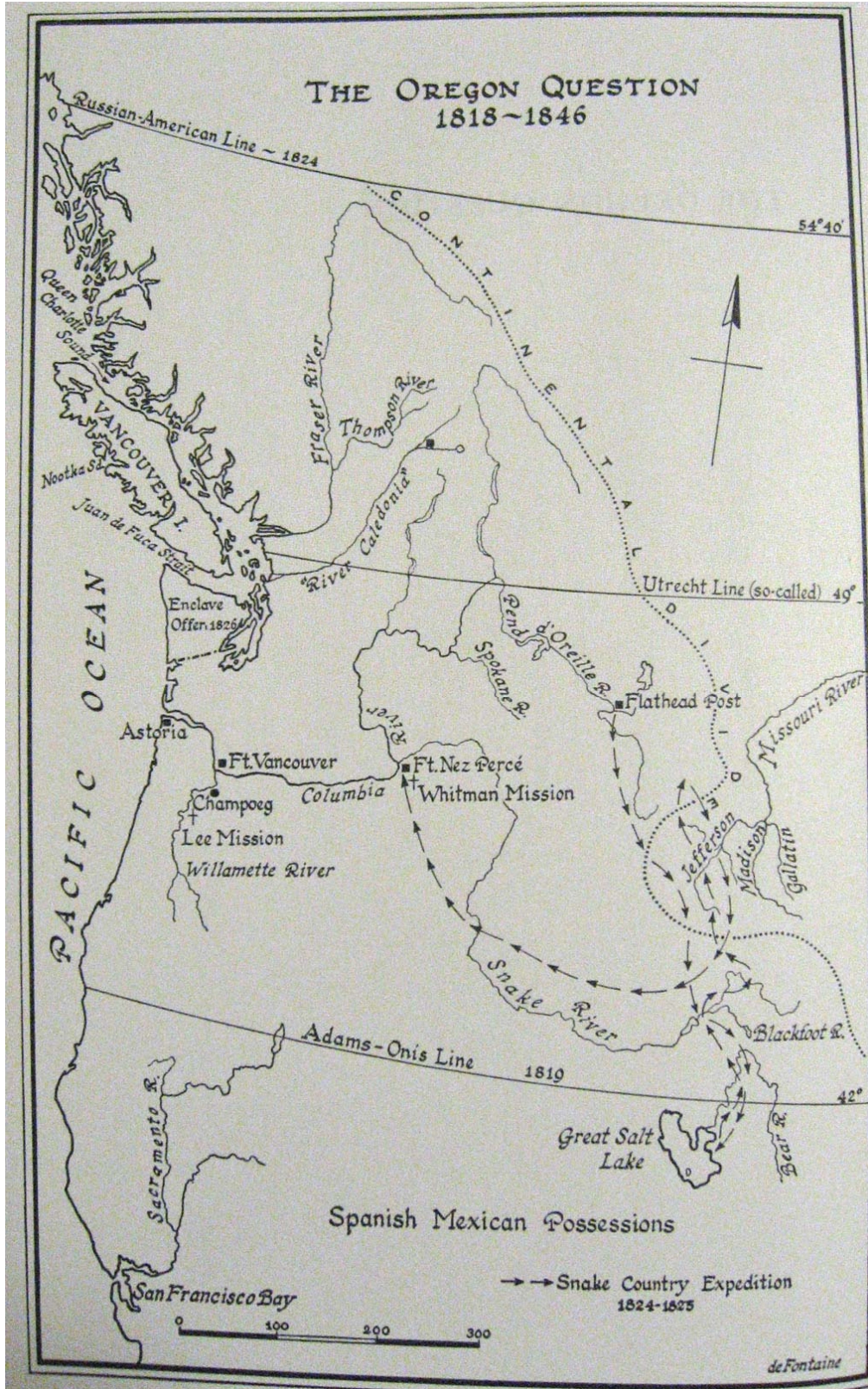
HEATHER LEIGH YEARGAN

Bachelor of Arts, 2005
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

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VITA

ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 1

THE ROAD TO LONDON

Late in the summer of 1841, a battle raged in the U.S. Senate concerning the approval of President John Tyler's appointment of a new Minister to Great Britain. Daniel Webster, who had remained in Tyler's Cabinet as Secretary of State after William Henry Harrison's death, wanted Edward Everett appointed to the station. He viewed Great Britain as a "most important place, just now, as well as the most honorable office in the gift of the Gov[ernment]."¹ Edward Everett, a well educated Whig politician and longtime friend of Webster, appeared to embody the necessary characteristics that a qualified candidate for the top U.S. diplomatic post in Great Britain required.

Since his earliest years, Everett had trained for a position like this. The son of a Congregational clergyman father, Oliver, and Lucy, the daughter of a wealthy Boston merchant, Everett showed much promise as a student. Everett's mother enrolled her son in a private school run by Ezekiel Webster in Boston. Daniel Webster, Ezekiel's younger brother, took over his teaching duties while Everett attended the school.² After a short attendance at Webster's school, Everett enrolled and soon graduated from Phillips Academy at Exeter in 1807. Here, Everett's powerful oratory and rhetorical abilities emerged.³

¹ Webster (hereafter cited as DW) to Brooks (Private and Confidential), 8 July 1841, Edward Everett Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society – microfilm) (hereafter cited as Everett Microfilm), Reel 7, Folder 2.

² Paul R. Frothingham, *Edward Everett: Orator and Statesman* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 6-8.

³ Daniel W. Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 27.

Everett continued his education at Harvard University, from which he graduated in 1811 with highest honors.⁴ Persuaded by professors and clergymen at Harvard, Everett abandoned the study of law to pursue his interest in the ministry.⁵ After receiving his Master of Arts in 1813 from Harvard, Everett accepted an offer to serve as minister to the Brattle Street Congregational Church, the most celebrated church in Boston.⁶ Everett left the clergy in March 1815 to join Harvard as a professor, teaching Greek literature.

Everett's next few years proved busy and eventful. Once Everett accepted the professorship at Harvard, he took a university-subsidized sabbatical to further his education in Europe.⁷ During a five-year visit, he traveled extensively across the continent and England, spending much of his time socializing with literary figures and other elite Europeans.⁸ In addition to travel, Everett earned a Ph.D. in two years from the University of Göttingen in Germany, making him one of the first Americans with a doctorate-level degree. Returning to the United States as one of the most educated Americans at the time, Everett resumed his teaching position at Harvard and accepted the editorship of the *North American Review*. While Everett served as the journal's editor from 1820 to 1823, some Americans started to call his journal the "North Unamerican," as European influence on Everett figured prominently into many of its articles.⁹ As editor, Everett met many prominent Americans and numerous statesmen.¹⁰

Before the age of thirty, Everett had already served as a clergyman, educator, and editor. He soon added U.S. Congressman to this illustrious list, when, in 1824, he won

⁴ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-22; Irving H. Bartlett, "Edward Everett Reconsidered," *The New England Quarterly* 69 (Sep. 1996): 427.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 431.

⁸ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 52-53.

⁹ William K. Christian, "The Mind of Edward Everett" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State College, 1952), 15.

¹⁰ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 68.

election as representative of Massachusetts's Middlesex district. Everett hurriedly resigned his position at Harvard, joining the House of Representatives in March 1825.¹¹ For ten years, Everett served his home state as a national representative but declined another nomination to the House in 1834. With Webster's help to secure the nomination, Everett defeated the Democratic competition handily to become Governor of Massachusetts the next year.¹² During his four years as Governor, he worked to improve the state's public education system, codify its common law, end imprisonment for debtors, to stop capital punishment, and to promote banking reforms.¹³ In 1839, Everett lost the governorship to Democratic candidate Marcus Morton.¹⁴

Throughout his early careers, Everett embodied much of the "enlightened and liberal conservatism" of the Whig party's ideology.¹⁵ Politically, he supported most Whig party tenets, such as the concentration of wealth as an important piece in the nation's continued prosperity.¹⁶ Everett also believed in conservative property rights.¹⁷ Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who like many of Everett's contemporaries, recognized the many early successes of Everett's life, notes of the young man: "Barely turned twenty, he had been a brilliant minister whose sermons moved John Quincy Adams to tears. Soon he left the pulpit for a chair at Harvard where his golden periods re-created Greece for Ralph Waldo Emerson. Now he shone in politics, a leading member of the

¹¹ Ibid., 90-1.

¹² Everett (hereafter cited as EE) to Zachary Taylor, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A; Bartlett, "Edward Everett Reconsidered," 439.

¹³ Paul A. Varg, *Edward Everett: The Intellectual in the Turmoil of Politics* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), 70-5.

¹⁴ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 153-4.

¹⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 32d Cong., 2d sess., 27, Appendix, 258.

¹⁶ Edward Everett, *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions*, 4 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1870-1878) 3: 135.

¹⁷ Christian, "Mind of Edward Everett," 390.

House and the white hope of the clubs of Boston.”¹⁸ During his early years as a politician, Everett also earned a widespread reputation as a hardworking official, a more than able speaker, and displayed a “scholarly exactness” that lasted throughout his life.¹⁹ Everett’s potential appeared almost limitless. These personal qualities of organization and sociability helped qualify him as a diplomat, whose daily tasks involved communicating important information.

Not long after he lost his bid for reelection as Massachusetts Governor in 1839, Everett took his family to Europe.²⁰ Looking to escape the disappointment of the defeat and for a climate more beneficial for his wife Catharine’s poor health, they settled in Italy in July 1840, where they often “moved in the very best society.”²¹ Although three thousand miles of ocean separated Everett from the United States, he remained well informed of its political activities, especially the upcoming presidential election. On several occasions, Everett wrote to General William Henry Harrison, the Whig Party candidate, sending his hope and support for the Presidential hopeful. In his correspondence with Harrison leading up to the election day, Everett also discussed the Northeastern boundary question, one of several contentious issues existing between the United States and Great Britain.²² Quite possibly, with this show of knowledge, Everett looked to maneuver towards a diplomatic post. Through the early days of December,

¹⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *The Age of Jackson* (New York: Little, Brown, & Co., 1945), 145.

¹⁹ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 61; Christian, “Mind of Edward Everett,” 8.

²⁰ Paul A. Varg, *New England and Foreign Relations, 1789-1850* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), 124.

²¹ Christian, “Mind of Edward Everett,” 28.

²² EE to Harrison, 8 August 1840, Everett Microfilm, Reel 26, Volume 69; EE to Harrison, 8 October 1840, Everett Microfilm, Reel 26, Volume 69.

Everett could only speculate about the possible Whig victory as he anxiously awaited the election results.²³

News of Harrison's victory in the 1840 election reached Europe and Everett later that month. Almost immediately, Everett saw an opportunity for reentering in politics. From Florence, Everett wrote to the president-elect, congratulating him for the victory.²⁴ When Harrison chose Everett's close friend, Daniel Webster, as his Secretary of State, the opportunity for Everett to secure a diplomatic appointment emerged. Everett's amiable relationship with Webster, the most influential Whig politician in Massachusetts at the time, played a large role in defining his personal and political life from the time the two met at Ezekiel Webster's school during Everett's childhood. Their friendship and similar political ideologies gave Everett a strong ally. Among many other shared activities, Everett had worked as Webster's presidential campaign manager in 1835.²⁵

In the spring of 1822, Everett had married Charlotte Gray Brooks, the daughter of Peter C. Brooks, reportedly one of the richest merchants in Boston at the time, which placed Everett in the highest circles of Massachusetts society.²⁶ At one point, Brooks had blatantly informed Webster of his affections, telling him that "the country depends on you & is more indebted to you than to any other man."²⁷ Brooks also acknowledged Webster's influence on his son-in-law's career. "To Mr. Webster's favorable opinion," Everett agreed, "I owe my appointment to London."²⁸ To many involved in American

²³ EE to Davis, 2 December 1840, Everett Microfilm, Reel 26, Volume 70.

²⁴ EE to Harrison, 18 December 1840, Everett Microfilm, Reel 26, Volume 70.

²⁵ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 93.

²⁶ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 75; Varg, *Edward Everett*, 23.

²⁷ Brooks to DW (Private), 13 July 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

²⁸ EE to Taylor, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

politics, Webster's appointment as Secretary of State assured almost completely that Everett would receive a diplomatic post in Europe.²⁹

With many difficulties threatening peace between the United States and Great Britain when he assumed his role as Secretary of State, Webster wanted a Minister in Great Britain that he could trust fully and rely on to execute U.S. diplomatic negotiations faithfully while encouraging conciliatory feelings between the two nations. By early July 1841, Webster knew that John Tyler would appoint a representative soon, and he felt that the President would more than likely follow his recommendation.³⁰ Webster himself had no small desire to obtain the appointment in London. "If I were not quite so poor," he once lamented to P. C. Brooks, "I should be proud of the place [as Minister] myself, if I could get it; but I am too poor to go to London."³¹ After removing himself from the pool of possible candidates, citing economic impossibility, Webster looked to Everett as his first choice for the position.

Before contacting Everett directly about his possible nomination, Webster wrote to P.C. Brooks, attempting to ascertain if Everett desired the appointment. "I have more than half an inclination," Webster told Brooks, "to recommend Mr Everett's immediate appointment; but I have no very recent information from him, nor do I know how the climate would suit his wife's health."³² Understanding Charlotte's weak constitution, Webster assumed that an appointment in Berlin or St. Petersburg would not suit the Everett family, as their harsh winters could harm Mrs. Everett's wellbeing. Brooks confirmed to Webster that his son-in-law had contemplated an appointment. Everett had

²⁹ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 93.

³⁰ DW to Brooks (Private and Confidential), 8 July 1841, Everett Microfilm Reel 7, Folder 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

previously confided to his father-in-law that, “If it is one that I can accept with convenience I shall do so. I cannot go to either of the Northern Courts. If the mission to England, France, or Venice should be offered me I should accept it.”³³ With Brooks’s advice in mind, Webster sent Everett a private note, informing him about the possible nomination. He also explained to Everett his own desire for the post in Great Britain but again cited inadequate funds.³⁴

In addition to his own political achievements and close relationship with Webster, Everett’s political ideology and educational background made him a good candidate for the top U.S. diplomatic station in Great Britain. Like many involved with the Whig Party, Everett had great interest in the political, economic, and social heritage of the United States, which led to a genial respect for its British ancestry.³⁵ Everett traced America’s political institutions to British roots.³⁶ In addition, Everett followed closely European affairs, knew several languages, and had the vital financial backing of his wealthy father-in-law, which allowed him the means necessary to live in England.

In late July, a very pleased Webster informed Everett of his nomination as Minister to Great Britain, hoping that the Senate would confirm quickly.³⁷ At the time, the United States had a quarrel with Great Britain concerning, among other issues, the illegal international slave trade. Although banned by the United States in 1807, many Americans engaged in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The British government, through its powerful Navy, consistently attempted to halt this practice by seizing ships it suspected of transporting slaves. Many Americans countered that the British actions violated their

³³ Brooks to DW, 13 July 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

³⁴ DW to EE (Private), 24 July 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

³⁵ Howe, *Political Culture*, 39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ DW to EE (Private), 24 July 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

rights and reminded them of the much-despised British impressments that helped lead to the War of 1812.³⁸ Adding to the confusion surrounding the illegal slave trade, many of the ships involved in this practice, whether or not they originated in the United States, flew the American flag, attempting to protect themselves from British searches.³⁹ One of the primary tasks of the American Minister to Great Britain consisted of frequent negotiations with the British government in order to gain compensation for any profits lost when the British seized U.S. ships they suspected of involvement in the slave trade. This issue led to ongoing quarrels between the two nations as well as between U.S. Senators.

Some Southern Senators had a vested interest in the selection of the new representative to Britain. Desiring a Southern sympathizer who would attack with ardor the British search of any American ships, many of them opposed Everett's nomination.⁴⁰ Some in this group opened a debate about Everett's nomination, and a few even recommended that Tyler withdraw the selection or appoint Everett as Minister to another country less concerned about issues pertaining to slavery.⁴¹ Opposition to Everett's confirmation surprised Webster, and he felt that Everett would not desire an appointment to another court. While Webster assured Everett, who had little public access to the Senate's actions while in Italy, that "all spoke well" of his talents and qualifications, several Senators did not agree with Everett's feelings on the irritable subject of slavery.⁴²

A cotton Whig, Edward Everett did not vehemently oppose slavery. Instead, cotton Whigs like Everett and Robert C. Winthrop, a prominent Massachusetts Whig

³⁸ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 103.

³⁹ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 183-5.

⁴⁰ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 94; Christian, "Mind of Edward Everett," 29.

⁴¹ DW to EE (Private), 20 November 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*

from Boston and close confidant of Everett, believed that most Northern textile mills relied on the cotton provided by the Southern slave economy. Early in his political career, Everett adopted a view of slavery much more conciliatory than the antislavery factions arising across the Northern United States at the time. Everett found in his reading of the U.S. Constitution a clear acknowledgment of the right for slavery to exist within the nation. He believed that the Constitution recognized slaves as property and that the just compensation clause of the Fifth Amendment protected slave owners from unwarranted removal of their human property.⁴³

While a member of the House of Representatives in March 1826, Everett had given a speech in which he mentioned a recent slave revolt in Haiti. In the speech, he expressed his acceptance of the constitutionality of slavery and belief that the government should protect the practice in the areas where slavery traditionally existed. Everett also avowed that if a slave revolt erupted in the South, then he would personally take up arms and fight to suppress the rebellion.⁴⁴ “There is no cause,” Everett said, “in which I would sooner buckle a knapsack on my back and put a musket on my shoulder than that of putting down a servile insurrection at the South.”⁴⁵ Much to the chagrin of many Northerners, Everett also referred to sections of the New Testament that promoted obedience from slaves to their masters.⁴⁶

Quick and negative reaction rose from many of his fellow politicians and constituents. Abolitionists and antislavery supporters, including William Lloyd Garrison

⁴³ *Record of Debates*, 20th Cong., 1 sess., 1058, quoted in Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

⁴⁴ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 41; Bartlett, “Edward Everett Reconsidered,” 436.

⁴⁵ Schlesinger, Jr., *Age of Jackson*, 63.

⁴⁶ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 106-108.

and Wendell Phillips, attacked Everett's position concerning slavery, believing that his defense of human bondage hurt their cause.⁴⁷ Everett countered, contending that they had misconstrued his statement. He explained that his unwavering support of the Constitution mandated his acceptance of slavery as a protected system, at least in the areas where it already existed.⁴⁸ In his inaugural address as Governor of Massachusetts in 1836, Everett again emphasized his beliefs that the Constitution protected slavery and asked the public to put the issue to rest.⁴⁹ Other than this misstep regarding slavery, Everett successfully avoided political humiliation while in the House or serving as Massachusetts Governor.

Seemingly, Southern Senators would have supported Tyler's nomination of Everett, once a self-pronounced protector of slavery. Yet, between the time of his 1826 speech in the House and his nomination as Minister to London in 1841, Everett had shifted towards a more antislavery view. While governor of Massachusetts, he had called slavery "a social, political, and a moral evil of the first magnitude."⁵⁰ He also opposed the continuation of slavery in Washington, D.C.⁵¹ By 1841, pro-slavery Southern Senators recognized that Everett would not prove a strong ally on issues involving slavery while in London.

Thus, a sectional dispute erupted concerning Everett's nomination as the Minister to Great Britain. Daniel Webster along with Robert Winthrop informed him of the opposition his nomination met in the Senate. Webster wrote Everett that "a few violent

⁴⁷ Christian, "Mind of Edward Everett," 380; Bartlett, "Edward Everett Reconsidered," 437.

⁴⁸ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 77.

⁴⁹ Christian, "Mind of Edward Everett," 26.

⁵⁰ EE to Jackson, 31 October 1837, quoted in Varg, *Edward Everett*, 78.

⁵¹ John O. Geiger, "A Scholar Meets John Bull: Edward Everett as United States Minister to England, 1841-1845," *New England Quarterly* 49 (Dec., 1976): 577.

partizans” sought to hinder his nomination.⁵² Only the day before, the *Washington Daily Globe* had published an article disapproving of Everett’s nomination. The *Globe* criticized Everett’s opposition to slavery “at a time when one of the questions at issue with England was the slave trade.”⁵³ Less optimistic than Webster, Winthrop and Fletcher Webster, the Secretary of State’s son, felt that the Senate would reject his nomination.⁵⁴

After a good deal of debate, the Senate narrowly confirmed Everett’s nomination on September 11, 1841 by a vote of twenty-three to nineteen.⁵⁵ Senators Henry Clay and Rufus Choate did much to secure Everett’s confirmation, as did President Tyler.⁵⁶ Before receiving official word of his confirmation, Everett had read several unofficial rumors about the Senate’s vote in several London newspapers and then in some private correspondence. Still without formal notification by mid October but fully anticipating official approval at any moment, he decided to start moving his family from Naples towards London.⁵⁷ When Everett received his commission in late October, the “pale, courteous and polished man, tall and erect, with a handsome, conventional face and his fatal flow of rhetoric,” had already begun to head to London.⁵⁸ Though the Senatorial debate concerning the slave trade did not last very long, it almost denied Everett the job as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain, a role in which he greatly affected his nation’s relations with Great Britain. The Senate confirmation sent a

⁵² DW to EE (Private), 24 July 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

⁵³ Daniel Webster, *The Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic Papers*, Vol. 1, 1841-1843. Ed. by Kenneth E. Shewmaker, Kenneth R. Stevens, and Anita McGurn, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), 19-20.

⁵⁴ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 94.

⁵⁵ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 21-2; Varg, *Edward Everett*, 94.

⁵⁶ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 183-85.

⁵⁷ EE to DW, 22 October 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

⁵⁸ Schlesinger, Jr., *Age of Jackson*, 145.

diplomat to London whose conciliatory character helped build a peace between the nations.

CHAPTER 2

ANGLO-AMERICAN DISCORD

With many disagreements threatening peace between Great Britain and the United States, the politically experienced Edward Everett seemed an ideal replacement for Andrew Stevenson as U.S. Minister to Great Britain. First, Everett's background gave him a positive outlook toward the English. Raised in the conservative Federalist tradition of Boston, he had inherited a "strong respect for British customs and standards."¹ "What American does not," Everett once contended, "feel proud that his fathers were the countrymen of Bacon, of Newton, and of Locke?"² He traced much of his pride for the formation and character of the United States to the "old family seat" of England.³

In addition to Everett's upbringing, his relationship with new Secretary of State Daniel Webster also made him a good candidate to spark a rapprochement with the British. Webster, formerly Everett's teacher and earlier in his life a Federalist, had a high opinion of the British, like many other men in the Whig Party. Webster commanded extensive influence on Everett's ideas about England.⁴ He, like Everett, held that when the British colonized the United States, they brought important beliefs from Francis Bacon, John Locke, William Shakespeare, and John Milton with them, which still influenced America in a constructive way.⁵ Webster's experiences with the British had given him positive views towards them. In the late 1830s, Webster had visited England,

¹ Allen W. Read, "Edward Everett's Attitude towards American English," *The New England Quarterly* 12 (Mar. 1939): 113.

² Christian, "Mind of Edward Everett," 110.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Wilbur D. Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841-1861* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974), 10-1.

⁵ Howe, *Political Culture*, 223.

where he found the people there kind and welcoming.⁶ In November 1841, when Everett began his work in England, his friendship and personal relations with Daniel Webster had lasted for more than thirty years. Webster wanted good relations with the British and believed that Everett's "ability and diligence" would enable him to solve many of the problems facing the two nations.⁷ In one of his first communications to Minister Everett, Webster instructed him to write as often as possible while in London.⁸

Much like Everett's close friendship with Webster, his cordial relationship with Lord Aberdeen improved his effectiveness in developing good relations between the nations. In September 1841, when Sir Robert Peel assumed the role of British Prime Minister, Aberdeen replaced Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office.⁹ Historian David Pletcher describes Palmerston and his rule of the Foreign Office as a period in which he "found it difficult to define long-range goals and to plan how to reach them with consistent, patient, logical policies."¹⁰ Consequently, many foreign governments distrusted his "tactlessness and unpredictability."¹¹ The United States did not escape Palmerston's foreign policy, which he often formulated on emotional pleas and almost predominately for British ends.¹² Personally, Palmerston ridiculed Americans. He disliked their bad manners and their tendency to expand economically and geographically, trends that could later threaten Britain's ambitions. His attitude and

⁶ Beckles Willson, *America's Ambassadors to England (1785-1928): A Narrative of Anglo-American Diplomatic Relations* (London: John Murray, 1928), 229.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁸ DW to EE (Private), 20 November 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

⁹ Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 536.

¹⁰ David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Wilbur D. Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 1.

actions earned him the unflattering but warranted nickname “Lord Pumicestone” outside of Great Britain.¹³

Peel’s selection of Lord Aberdeen came at an opportune time, as Anglo-American relations continued to deteriorate, and the United States looked toward diplomacy as a solution. This change later proved critical in building a positive relationship for the two nations. In sharp contrast with his predecessor, Lord Aberdeen possessed a mild, patient, and pacific manner.¹⁴ The shy and courteous Scottish aristocrat also brought a more cosmopolitan view to the Foreign Office, as he had traveled much more than Palmerston.¹⁵ Most importantly, Aberdeen entered his new post with the primary concern of restoring relations with foreign nations, top among them the United States, which delighted Everett and Webster.¹⁶

Upon his first meeting with Lord Aberdeen, Peel’s Foreign Secretary, Everett recorded his optimism about the man he would work most closely with while Minister to Great Britain. “He received me with great ease and courtesy and placed me at once at my own ease. He is, I should think, about fifty-three years of age, of middle stature, slightly – very slightly – lame with one leg.”¹⁷ Instead of Palmerston’s anti-American feelings, Aberdeen met Everett with much friendliness.¹⁸ Everett established a quick bond with Aberdeen, who treated Everett with courtesy and friendship.¹⁹ Many years after leaving his diplomatic post in London, Everett recollected that Lord Aberdeen “was a

¹³ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 19.

¹⁴ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 230.

¹⁵ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 20.

¹⁶ Geiger, “A Scholar Meets John Bull,” 583.

¹⁷ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 188.

¹⁸ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 12.

¹⁹ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 21.

conciliatory and good-tempered man We got on extremely well together.”²⁰ Everett’s antislavery sympathies and attitude also pleased Aberdeen. These positive feelings proved significant, as Aberdeen, as much as any other person in Great Britain, made the British foreign policy that affected the United States. Many citizens of both nations viewed Everett’s appointment as a “gleam of hope” in keeping peace.²¹

Everett’s social talents with the English complemented his respect for Great Britain. While visiting Britain in the late 1810s as a young man, Everett made many friends, especially with the upper classes of British society. He met the Duke of Sussex, Lord Lansdowne, Sir Samuel Romilly, Lord Auckland, and Dr. Edward Holland.²² His intellectual ability, social skills, and charm made him very popular with these members of British high society.²³

Upon his return to London as American Minister, Everett rekindled his relationships with many of these people. He also formed acquaintances or friendships with many of Britain’s political elites, such as Sir Robert Peel, Lord Aberdeen, and Benjamin Disraeli, as well as many British citizens of top social and literary rank, such as Samuel Rogers, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Sydney Smith, Henry Hallam, and William Wordsworth, the famous British romantic poet.²⁴ Less than a month after his arrival, Everett had dined with the Queen and Prince Albert, the Duchess of Kent, and Lord Aberdeen at Windsor Castle.²⁵ He encountered many of the most important people in England, as Webster had given him several letters of introduction.²⁶ While some

²⁰ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 241.

²¹ Muriel E. Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen: A Political Biography* (New York: Longman, 1983), 317.

²² Read, “Edward Everett’s Attitude,” 114-17.

²³ Christian, “Mind of Edward Everett,” 29.

²⁴ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 190.

²⁵ EE to DW(?), 17 December 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

²⁶ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 231.

Americans accused Everett of “being too English, an aristocrat, and fond of ostentation,” his attitude towards the British, combined with his sense of obligation to his own government, enabled him to work for towards understanding between the two nations.²⁷

Furthermore, Everett’s financial situation made him a good choice as Minister to Great Britain. Diplomatic life in London required wealth, and the post offered an inadequate salary that did not cover the immense expenses incurred while occupying it. Although Everett did not have much personal wealth, his father-in-law, a wealthy merchant, shared his money willingly. Throughout his time as Minister, Everett borrowed money on several occasions to cover the family’s expenses, as he spent beyond his salary every year.²⁸ After a few years in London, Everett insisted that “it is impossible to get along with less than fifteen thousand dollars a year, a very large sum according to the scale of expenditure in Boston, but here I often hear surprise expressed, by those who know the extent of our means, that we get along as well as we do.”²⁹ During his time in London, the United States government reduced the already low salary of the American Minister, further preventing Everett from extending hospitality towards Americans visiting Great Britain and from reciprocating favors from those in England.³⁰ Everett confided to another friend that his salary did not cover more than two thirds of his annual expenses while Minister. Everett took solace in the idea that he served his country “faithfully, and in an honorable and arduous trust.”³¹ The financial assistance, combined

²⁷ Christian, “Mind of Edward Everett,” 29. (originally from Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England 1785-1929* (New York, 1929), p. 234.

²⁸ EE to DW (Confidential), 29 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2; EE to Brooks, 16 November 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

²⁹ EE to Brooks (Private), 2 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

³⁰ EE to Appleton, 27 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

³¹ EE to Sewall, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

with this feeling of duty to his nation, helped make Everett an excellent selection for the United States to send to London.

Edward Everett's unique blend of personal and diplomatic capabilities allowed him to mesh well with the British and improve Anglo-American accord through a settlement of the Oregon boundary of North America's Pacific northwest. His ability to form close relationships with key British diplomats and diligent work ethic helped Everett successfully to lay the groundwork for the Oregon Treaty of 1846 while U.S. Minister to Great Britain.

Everett relocated his family from Naples, Italy to London with much haste once receiving his official title, granted formally on September 21.³² The Everetts arrived in London on November 18 and set up their residence at 46 Grosvenor Place, located close to the Buckingham Palace gardens. Everett went to work right away without the advice or guidance of his predecessor, Andrew Stevenson, who along with the secretary of the legation had already departed London.³³ He encountered a new ministry upon his arrival in London, led by Sir Robert Peel, which had replaced the Melbourne government in September. Everett, like many in the United States, understood the importance in this change. "A new ministry," Everett told Webster, "was here coming into power; belonging to a party, with whom the United States have always found is more easy to get along, than with the opposite party."³⁴

The Oregon boundary dispute between Great Britain and the United States pertained to an area in the Pacific northwest region of the North American continent. The northern boundary, at fifty-four degrees, forty minutes north latitude, the southern line at

³² DW to EE, 10 December 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 2.

³³ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

³⁴ 31 January 1842, EE to DW, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 3.

the forty-second parallel, the Rocky Mountains to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west formed the borders for the immense region in dispute. Each nation had long-standing claims to the area. Well before the 1840s, Americans and Britons had attempted on several occasions to settle assertions to the land through negotiation. Some Americans, such as former President John Q. Adams and many anti-slavery Northerners, proposed United States expansion into the area, which, when Everett came to London in 1841, the two nations shared through joint-occupation.³⁵

Before Everett could take steps towards settling the Oregon boundary question, he faced a dangerous set of problems threatening to upset Anglo-American relations. Beginning his official work immediately upon his arrival in London, Everett received a dispatch from Webster that delineated many of the most pressing issues standing between the United States and Great Britain. Webster explained the most problematic troubles under discussion:

Those of the most commanding interest and highest importance are, 1st The capture and destruction of the Steamboat “Caroline” at Schlosser, in December, 1837, and the murder of an American citizen by an armed expedition from the Province of Canada, acting under the command of officers in Her Majesty’s service, and 2ndly the seizure, search, and detention, by British armed cruisers, of American vessels, principally on the western coast of Africa, under the pretence that such vessels were engaged, or intended to engage, in the African Slave Trade.³⁶

Other unsettled affairs included the U.S. northeastern boundary and the interest of Great Britain in the U.S. relationship with Texas, and the boundary of the Oregon Territory. Thus, in 1841, several matters had greater potential to insight immediate and explosive effects on the nations’ relations than the boundary of the Oregon Territory.

³⁵ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 103; Howe, *Political Culture*, 67.

³⁶ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 162-3.

Daniel Webster, the only member of Harrison's Cabinet to remain in Tyler's administration after the president vetoed the National bank bill, continued to serve as secretary of state. In addition to his stated purpose of retaining his appointment to negotiate with the British on a number of issues that threatened the peace, Webster also had designs on the White House and hoped his future accomplishments in the State Department would lead to the Presidency.

One of the primary concerns of the U.S. State Department concerning its relations with Great Britain involved the *Caroline* incident. Using a small steamboat, the *Caroline*, to aid Canadians rebelling against British rule, Americans in New York began supplying them with men and military equipment at Navy Island, a British possession located in the middle of the Niagara River.³⁷ In December 1837, British officials sent a force to capture the steamboat. When the British did not find the *Caroline* on Navy Island, they crossed the Niagara River, seized the ship from its harbor, near Buffalo, and destroyed the vessel by setting it on fire and sending it over the river's famous falls.³⁸

After the incident, the British claimed that all Americans aboard the *Caroline* had escaped before its destruction, but many Americans disagreed. The problem escalated when Americans found Amos Durfee, a U.S. citizen, shot dead on the dock. The British government ignored U.S. protests over the *Caroline* for many months, leading to more anger from Americans, upset at Britain's silence concerning the matter, which tarnished U.S. national honor. Historians Howard Jones and Donald A. Rakestraw suggest that the delay of a British acknowledgement of the episode "constituted tacit approval of the attack" by Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston, who called the destruction of the *Caroline*

³⁷ Paul A. Varg, *United States Foreign Relations, 1820-1860*, (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1979), 95.

³⁸ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 3.

an act of “necessity.”³⁹ Andrew Stevenson, then the U.S. Minister in Great Britain, received a censure from Palmerston after calling this event an illegal act on the part of the British.⁴⁰

Subsequent events further inflamed the issue, as New Yorkers began to arrest Canadians who they claimed had participated in the *Caroline* affair. On November 12, 1840, New York authorities arrested Alexander McLeod, a Canadian deputy sheriff and known antagonist of Americans, charging him with arson and the murder of Durfee.⁴¹ The British government demanded that New York release McLeod, claiming that he had acted only as a soldier in the service of his government.⁴² In February 1841, Lord Palmerston informed the British Minister in Washington, Henry S. Fox, of the gravity of this issue. “I presume,” Palmerston wrote, “that if we tell him [John Forsyth, the U.S. Secretary of State] that in the event of McLeod’s execution we should make war upon the State of New York, he would reply that in such case we should *ipso facto* be at war with the rest of the Union.”⁴³

Another pressing matter grew out of continued American participation in the international slave trade. Although the United States had outlawed it in 1820, many U.S. ships continued to transport slaves from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean. Britain’s powerful Navy policed the western coast of Africa, attempting to prevent this illegal trade. The United States resisted British attempts to search the vessels that the British

³⁹ Howard Jones and Donald A. Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny: Anglo-American Relations in the 1840s* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1997), 37.

⁴⁰ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 99.

⁴¹ Kenneth R. Stevens, *Border Diplomacy: The Caroline and McLeod Affairs in Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1837-1842* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 16, 71.

⁴² Varg, *Edward Everett*, 87.

⁴³ Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 254.

Navy suspected of carrying slaves illegally.⁴⁴ Everett noted that America's resistance to Great Britain's methods of suppressing the trade led to great expenses for the United States, which maintained a squadron off the African coast to protect U.S. ships from British search.⁴⁵

Everett referred to the slave trade as one of the "delicate questions" existing between the two nations.⁴⁶ He sensed that Andrew Stevenson had made a mistake by attempting to force the new Peel Ministry into a "prompt commitment of themselves on this difficult question."⁴⁷ It also upset Everett that Stevenson had waited until the last days of his service in London to speak to Lord Palmerston about the slave trade and right of search.⁴⁸

When Everett arrived in London, one argument between Great Britain and the United States concerned the seizure of several U.S. ships by the British Navy off the African coast. Everett disliked this aspect of his job, informing Webster in December 1843 that he wished American participation in the trafficking of slaves, a practice "condemned by religion and humanity and revolting to the public feeling of the American people," would stop.⁴⁹ From his first month in London, Everett stressed to Aberdeen that "nothing would contribute so much to allay the excitement caused in the United States by these seizures in the African seas" than swift and fair reimbursement any American ships that the British had stopped incorrectly.⁵⁰ Similarly, Aberdeen promised Everett that any

⁴⁴ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 96.

⁴⁵ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 235-6.

⁴⁶ EE to DW, 31 January 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 235-6.

⁵⁰ EE to Aberdeen, 27 December 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 21, Volume 42.

American ship wrongfully identified and detained as a slave trader would receive “prompt compensation” by the British.⁵¹

Another U.S. complaint against Great Britain involved the *Creole*, an American ship legally carrying slaves from Virginia to New Orleans in October 1841. At sea, slaves on board the *Creole* rose up, killed some of the crew, and forced the survivors to sail to Nassau, in the British Bahamas. The British had abolished slavery in all areas of its Empire by 1841, so when the *Creole* arrived in Nassau, the British officials, following British municipal law, released all of the slaves, who promptly disappeared into the countryside.⁵² The decision to free the slaves infuriated many Americans, especially Southerners, who worried about the dangerous implications of the precedent that slaves could kill their white masters and escape to areas that had banned slavery. Despite public outcry concerning the *Creole*, Daniel Webster believed that Lord Aberdeen had just and liberal sentiments on the issue.⁵³ Aberdeen, though, had told the House of Lords that the British officers in Nassau did not have the power to try the mutineers or surrender them to the United States when the U.S. demanded it.⁵⁴ Webster instructed Everett to “demand indemnification for the slave holders.”⁵⁵ By February 1842, Everett believed “the subject...so important and delicate, that I shall feel obliged to proceed with caution and due deliberation.”⁵⁶

Another issue involved the disputed border between Maine and Canada. When the Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution in 1783, the United States and Great

⁵¹ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 318.

⁵² Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, 108; Jones and Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny*, 89.

⁵³ DW to EE (Private), 31 May 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

⁵⁴ EE to DW, 18 February 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 3.

⁵⁵ Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 108.

⁵⁶ EE to DW (Private), 18 February 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 44.

Britain had attempted to draw a boundary line between their land holdings on an inaccurate map, which referenced rivers and other geographical features that neither country could identify accurately. Land claims by Maine and Massachusetts further complicated the boundary controversy, as the two states appointed their own commissioners to determine the boundary in their favor.⁵⁷ This action contributed to U.S. rejection of the compromise line suggested in arbitration by the King of the Netherlands in 1827.⁵⁸ Thus, after decades of negotiating, the two nations continued to argue about the exact boundary between Maine and Canada.

By the Tyler administration, the dispute had escalated, as American and Canadian timber companies sought possession of the area in question, wanting to access its timber resources. The British, in addition to their economic interests, wanted to protect the area as an alternate route to access and supply their Canadian outposts when the St. Lawrence River froze in the winter months. One way to protect their settlements included increasing the number of British troops in Maine from 2,000 to 10,500 from January 1838 to Spring 1839.⁵⁹

Edward Everett and many others worried that the northeastern boundary dispute, which he described in 1840 as “a question so difficult in itself and rendered doubly so by the mismanagement and neglect of the past and present administrations,” could end in war.⁶⁰ While Governor of Massachusetts, Everett had recommended that the United States negotiate with Great Britain to solve the boundary. Once in London, Everett spent much time conversing with Lord Aberdeen on this topic, and they agreed that they

⁵⁷ DW to EE (Private), 31 May 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

⁵⁸ George J. Gill, “Edward Everett and the Northeastern Boundary Controversy,” *The New England Quarterly* 42 (Jun. 1969): 204.

⁵⁹ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 3.

⁶⁰ EE to Harrison, 8 October 1840, Everett Microfilm, Reel 26, Volume 69.

needed to compromise in order to make an acceptable arrangement.⁶¹ Representatives of both nations agreed that setting a boundary in what Aberdeen often referred to as valueless land would likely prevent a desolating war.⁶²

Two other issues between the United States and Great Britain when Everett arrived in London, Texas annexation and the Oregon boundary dispute, commanded little attention from Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton, a British representative, when the two men attempted to settle these outstanding issues in the summer of 1842. U.S. annexation of Texas worried Great Britain, as such an action would likely expand slavery and affect British economic interests in Texas cotton production.⁶³ Much like the Northeastern boundary problem, the Oregon boundary dispute also concerned a segment of land on the “undefined Canadian-American border” that divided British and American holdings in the Pacific Northwest.⁶⁴ When Webster and Ashburton met to discuss all of the problems facing the two nations, neither nation’s negotiator concentrated on the Texas and Oregon issues, especially as several, more dangerous issues overshadowed them. Thus, when Everett arrived in England, the relations between the two nations appeared very precarious.

⁶¹ Gill, “Edward Everett and Northeastern Boundary,” 201-2; EE to DW (Private), 17 May 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 44.

⁶² Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 19; EE to DW, 21 August 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 2.

⁶³ Edward P. Crapol, *John Tyler: The Accidental President* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 69-70; Dan Monroe, *The Republican Vision of John Tyler* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 161-2.

⁶⁴ Jones and Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny*, xiii.

CHAPTER 3

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

As Everett began his mission, he allotted little of his attention to settling the Oregon dispute. Many people in the United States had suspected that the Tyler administration had sent Everett to open negotiations with Lord Aberdeen in London.¹ Instead, Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen decided to negotiate in Washington, with full confidence that Secretary of State Webster's positive disposition towards Britain would lead to a successful outcome. This did not surprise Everett, who had received his first diplomatic instructions from Webster in late December 1841, informing him that Webster would attempt to settle the disputes in Washington. Not long after Lord Aberdeen took office as Foreign Secretary, he realized that most Americans disliked Henry Fox, the sitting British Minister in the United States, who had similar feelings towards Americans.² With Everett's assurance that the United States wanted to negotiate, Aberdeen elected to send a special mission to Washington to settle all of the outstanding issues.³

He selected Lord Ashburton to resolve the problems between the two nations. An old man when he accepted Aberdeen's appointment on December 22, 1841, Ashburton, a leader of the Conservative Party, had ties with the United States, including his membership with the Baring Brothers banking firm and his American-born wife.⁴ Webster, who had once worked for the same British banking house, already knew Lord

¹ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 17.

² Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 316.

³ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 10-11.

⁴ William H. Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed: The Romantic Horizon in American Diplomacy, 1800-1860* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), 49.

Ashburton when they met to negotiate in the summer of 1842. Before Ashburton's departure, he invited Everett to meet with him for a few days time. During Everett's visit, the two engaged in hours' long discussions, or "free conversation," in which they conversed about the important issues threatening positive Anglo-American relations, particularly the northeastern boundary dispute.⁵ While Everett claimed to have not attempted any official diplomatic conversations, he "told Lord Ashburton what we [the United States] could & would do," in terms of a settlement for the northeastern boundary, before he left for Washington.⁶

Lord Ashburton left England on a friendly mission, made of Britain's own accord, with the belief that Aberdeen cared more about his securing any treaty with the United States rather than the specific terms of that treaty. In fact, Aberdeen regarded none of the issues between Great Britain and the United States as vital to his nation's security.⁷ His instructions to Ashburton reflected this attitude clearly. In them, the Foreign Secretary asserted, in regards to the northeastern boundary, that "the whole disputed territory" had marginal value and that "a more or less fifty-fifty division should satisfy both parties."⁸ Aberdeen's instructions did not mention to Ashburton the importance to the British of retaining the land route from Halifax to Quebec and removing Americans from the land immediately south of Quebec.

When Ashburton left for the United States in early 1842, he hoped to settle the existing differences between the two nations.⁹ Many in the United States, none more than Webster, also expected positive results from Lord Ashburton's mission. Webster

⁵ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 19-20.

⁸ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 321.

⁹ Ashburton to EE, 3 January 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 3.

felt that Ashburton's "frank and candid manner, his great intelligence and practical ability, and the apparent justness and moderation of his views and principles" would lead to a satisfactory deal.¹⁰ Still, Webster worried that "if the [northeastern] boundary question be put into another endless ... series of surveys, explorations, [and] arbitrations," then, "a mission the intention of which was hailed as a bright harbinger of the restoration of perfect amenity and harmony between the two countries, and in the conduct of which I am sure the best disposition had uniformly prevailed, will only have terminated in leaving things much worse than it found them."¹¹

President Tyler agreed that if the Ashburton mission failed, the relations with the British would decline further.¹² Ashburton's standing as a problem-solver also added to Tyler's worries. Despite desiring a resolution, Ashburton had a "reputation for irresolution, which age was not likely to have cured."¹³ In late May 1842, Ashburton finally received official sanction and full powers to begin the negotiations concerning the *Creole*, northeastern boundary, slave trade, *Caroline* affair, and northwestern boundary, issues that Webster described as "questions which have already brought us to the perilous edge of battle."¹⁴ The Peel Government gave Ashburton much authority in settling the Maine boundary, easing the fears of Webster that the northeastern boundary issue would move again toward arbitration.¹⁵

¹⁰ DW to EE, 28 June 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 316.

¹⁴ Ibid., 317; Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 21; DW to EE, 23 April 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

¹⁵ DW to EE (Private), 31 May 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

As the negotiations began, Everett asked Webster to keep him apprized of the progress, which proved disorderly and informal.¹⁶ Webster wrote him promptly and described Ashburton's mission as "one whose purpose is to conciliate a compromise, and not to threaten."¹⁷ The Maine boundary issue surfaced promptly as the "principle object of the mission."¹⁸ Ashburton and Webster worried that the two nations would not find compromise on the northeastern boundary problem, which threatened to dissolve the negotiations.¹⁹ In addition to the claims of the two nations, the states of Maine and Massachusetts had sent commissioners to the area to secure their own states' claims to the territory under debate. While Webster and Ashburton worked through the hot Washington summer, Everett discussed the subjects of the negotiation with Sir Robert Peel in London. While dining at the home of the Earl of Rapon, the President of the Board of Trade, in late July [1842], Peel notified Everett about Ashburton's communications to London, which noted the good prospect of adjusting the Maine boundary in an agreeable way to both parties.²⁰

Thanks in large part to the actions of Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton, the two governments signed the final form of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty on August 10, 1842, and the U.S. Senate ratified it on August 20. Also known as the Treaty of Washington, the agreement settled almost every issue hindering good Anglo-American relations. Thinking back on his talks with Lord Ashburton before he left Great Britain to

¹⁶ EE to DW, 18 April 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

¹⁷ DW to EE, 23 April 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

¹⁸ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 23.

¹⁹ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 323; DW to EE, 28 June 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 1.

²⁰ EE to DW (No. 19), 1 August 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 44.

start on the negotiations, Everett believed that he, too, had played a role in assisting Ashburton to conclude the treaty.²¹

The Treaty included an important compromise on the northeastern boundary issue, as the two drew a clear line that extended through the Great Lakes area and to the Rocky Mountains. It also eased tensions concerning the *Creole*, as Ashburton conceded the right of search in exchange for U.S. support in the suppression of the international slave trade.²² The two countries agreed to joint cruising of the African coast, in which their navies would work together to prevent the illegal trade.²³ The agreement, though, did not include a statement that made it illegal for British ships to stop and search American ships during times of peace.²⁴ With the *Caroline*, Ashburton, upon Webster's suggestion, expressed regret that the British government had not made a quick apology to the United States for what happened to the steamship.²⁵ Just before the Webster-Ashburton negotiations started, Webster had attempted to ensure Alexander McLeod's acquittal, arguing in part that New York had no jurisdiction in the case.²⁶ In October 1841, New York ruled in McLeod's favor, thereby resolving the issue. The treaty also solved the *Creole* affair through an exchange of notes, which included a "retrospective apology" by the British.²⁷

The Treaty received mixed reactions. In addition to its namesakes, President Tyler, Sir Robert Peel, and Lord Aberdeen all had high praise for it. Aberdeen lauded Ashburton's accomplishment. "The good temper in which you have left them all

²¹ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

²² EE to DW (Confidential), 29 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

²³ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 103.

²⁴ Frederick Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 94.

²⁵ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 326.

²⁶ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 108; Bartlett, "Edward Everett Reconsidered," 445.

²⁷ Stevens, *Border Diplomacy*, 164-5; Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 23.

[Americans],” Aberdeen gushed to Ashburton upon his return to Great Britain in September 1842, “and the prospect of a continued peace, with I trust improved friendly relations, far outweigh in my mind the value of any additional extent of Pine Swamp.”²⁸ Aberdeen also expressed to Everett his satisfaction with the treaty.²⁹ Webster believed that the treaty would promote goodwill between the nations and preserve peace.³⁰ Likewise, Everett applauded the treaty, claiming the British accepted it with universal satisfaction.³¹ He congratulated Lord Aberdeen on the passage of the treaty, hoping that the successful result of Ashburton’s special mission would “be the harbinger of the kindest feelings and the most beneficial relations between Great Britain and the United States.”³²

As September went on, Everett started to realize that not all in Great Britain supported the treaty. Talking to Robert Winthrop, who had no direct involvement in the negotiations, Everett obtained a more realistic description of the situation. Winthrop explained to Everett that “All men of sense, who understand the subject and know its difficulties, regard it as a fair and wise settlement of the controversy. The Whigs [in Britain] are vexed, at seeing the Ministry settle such a difficult business, which had so long baffled their own skill. A few needy agents and Commissioners, who lived upon the quarrel, of course, are displeased at losing their bread.”³³

Lord Palmerston led the disapproval of the Treaty’s settlement of the northeastern boundary. Along with the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Globe*, several British

²⁸ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 28; Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 255-6.

²⁹ EE to DW (Private), 1 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

³⁰ DW to EE (Private), 27(?) April 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 1.

³¹ EE to DW (No. 21), 1 September 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

³² EE to Aberdeen (Private), 15 September 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

³³ EE to Winthrop, 19 September 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

newspapers, including some Tory-associated journals, echoed Palmerston's concerns.³⁴ The liberal press had harsh words about the settlement of the boundary in the United States as well.³⁵ On March 21, 1843, Palmerston attacked the terms of the treaty, especially the settlement of the Northeastern boundary, which he none too pleasantly referred to as the "wretched boundary of the present Treaty."³⁶ He felt that Ashburton had established a line much too favorable to the United States.³⁷

The Webster-Ashburton Treaty settled most of the diplomatic issues between the United States and Britain. Riding the success of the treaty, President John Tyler started to push for the annexation of Texas. Tyler's new goal forced Webster's resignation from the State Department, as neither he nor his Massachusetts constituents would support the annexation of Texas, a slaveholding territory most likely to enter the United States as a slave state. Webster left the State Department in May 1843, framing his departure in a positive light. "Nothing gives me more satisfaction," he told Everett, "in leaving this Department, than the humble trust, that the questions, which have existed between the two countries, and which have been subjects of discussion, since I came into office, will be formed to have been settled in a manner honorable to both, likely to promote harmony and good will between them, and to preserve the peace of the world."³⁸

Webster's resignation opened the way for President Tyler to pursue an annexation treaty with the Republic of Texas. He replaced Webster with Abel P. Upshur, of

³⁴ Gill, "Edward Everett and Northeastern Boundary," 206; EE to DW (Private), 17 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

³⁵ 17 October 1842, EE to DW, (Private), Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

³⁶ Gill, "Edward Everett and Northeastern Boundary," 209.

³⁷ Palmerston to EE, 2 August 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 3.

³⁸ DW to EE, 27(?) April 1843, (Private), Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 1.

Virginia.³⁹ Many politicians in Great Britain regretted Webster's resignation. It also upset Everett, who lost his strongest ally in the State Department as he turned his attention from concerns settled in the recent treaty to focus on settling the Oregon boundary dispute.⁴⁰

After the nations had ratified the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, Everett, along with Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen turned their focus to the Oregon question. Great Britain and the United States shared a long and complicated history concerning the disputed territory. Although the area under debate spanned from the southern border of Alaska to the northern limit of California and from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, Frederick Merk, the eminent scholar on the Oregon question, rightly ascertains that the land which most concerned the two nations formed "a triangle bounded on the north by the 49th parallel and on the south and east by the Columbia River – the area now the northwestern two-thirds of the state of Washington."⁴¹ Both nations had long-standing claims in the area.

The United States based its claims to the area on Captain Robert Gray's discovery of the "the mightiest river in the Pacific Northwest," on May 11, 1792, "baptising [sic] the river itself with the name of his vessel."⁴² Historian Donald A. Rakestraw describes Gray's finding of the Columbia River as the "foundation on which it [the United States] could construct a claim by discovery to the Valley of the Columbia and, subsequently, a

³⁹ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 170.

⁴⁰ EE to DW, 18 May 1843, (Private), Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Box 9, Folder 1.

⁴¹ Frederick Merk, "British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty," *American Historical Review* 37 (Jul., 1932): 653.

⁴² Donald A. Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny: The Anglo-American Crisis over the Oregon Territory* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 6; John B. Moore, ed., *The Works of James Buchanan, Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence*, 12 vols., (New York: Antiquarian Press Ltd., 1960), 6: 201.

right to U.S. sovereignty on the Pacific coast.”⁴³ American exploration of the region by the Lewis and Clark expedition in the early 1800s and the establishment of Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River by John Jacob Astor in 1811 strengthened American claims in the region.⁴⁴ American emigration into the Willamette Valley, a tributary of the Columbia River, also bolstered U.S. claims. As each of these actions occurred south of the Columbia River, the United States claim to the area south of the forty-ninth degree grew stronger as time passed.

British claims in the area also grew after the initial discovery of the Columbia River. In 1792, British Captain George Vancouver, who also explored the Pacific Northwest, dispatched one of his crew, William R. Broughton, to travel up and explore the Columbia River. This, combined with the existence of the British fur trading business, the Hudson’s Bay Company, strengthened the British claims in the area.⁴⁵ Focusing on trapping and selling furs, the company actively expanded throughout the early 1800s. By the 1840s, the company owned trading posts close to the forty-sixth parallel.⁴⁶ Also, Great Britain had the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, located in the heavily wooded area north of the Columbia River.⁴⁷

Both nations desired control of some or all of this land. The easily accessible ports that the Straits of Juan de Fuca offered helped make it important. While the United States hoped that it could use the Columbia River as a Pacific port that would ease trade

⁴³ Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 6.

⁴⁴ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 40; Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1935), 136; Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 8-9.

⁴⁵ Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 7.

⁴⁶ Travis L. Crosby, *Sir Robert Peel’s Administration, 1841-1846* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976), 117.

⁴⁷ Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*, 68; Frederick Merk, *The Oregon Question: Essays in Anglo-American Diplomacy and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 240-1.

with the Pacific world, it soon discovered that the river “affords very small accommodations to commerce, in comparison with its size, or volume of water.”⁴⁸ Also, for nine months out of the year, its mouth is impassable for practical purposes. If it did not prove to be a good port, then the U.S. would not have “one tolerable harbour on the whole [Pacific] coast.”⁴⁹

The first major land dispute in this area occurred in 1790 between Great Britain and Spain. During the Nootka Controversy of 1790, the Spanish government had insisted that:

The right of Spain to the Sovereignty of the North Western coast of America, as far North at least as the 61° degree of North latitude, had been established by the “treaties, demarcations, takings of possession, & the most decided acts of sovereignty exercised by the Spaniards, from the reign of Charles II of Spain, and authorised [sic] by that Monarch in 1692.”⁵⁰

The British contention in 1790 did not deny this, but it did successfully challenge the Spanish monopoly of coastal trade in the area with the Nootka Sound Convention.⁵¹ The British claim to the Pacific Northwest originated from this arrangement.

The region received little attention from British and American authorities until the War of 1812 and the resulting Treaty of Ghent, which ended the conflict in 1814. Under the treaty, Britain and the United States were to submit any remaining boundary disputes between them to arbitration.⁵² First attempting to solve the boundary issues through one-on-one negotiations, representatives from both nations convened the Anglo-American Convention of 1818. The United States sent Albert Gallatin and Richard Rush to

⁴⁸ DW to EE (Private), 28 November 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ EE to Upshur (No. 69), 2 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁵¹ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 40.

⁵² Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 49.

negotiate with British representatives Stratford Canning and William Huskisson.⁵³ While they negotiated the return of Fort Astoria to the United States, which the British had overrun during the War of 1812, the members did not reach an agreement on the Oregon boundary, as the British rejected the American offer of a boundary at the forty-ninth degree.⁵⁴ Thus, in October 1818, the two nations decided to share the land, through joint occupation, for a ten-year period.⁵⁵ During this time, citizens of both countries could settle in the Oregon Territory.⁵⁶ Also in these negotiations, the two nations had agreed that any expansion of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Oregon Territory would have no subsequent bearing on either nation's claim to the area.⁵⁷

The year after the 1818 convention, the United States signed the Adams-Onís Treaty with Spain, in which the United States, among other items, gained all remaining Spanish claims above the forty-second parallel.⁵⁸ John Q. Adams, the treaty's U.S. namesake, had always held suspicions that the British desired the Oregon Territory.⁵⁹ Thus, Adams attempted to strengthen U.S. claims to the area by this 1819 agreement that arranged Spanish relinquishment of its claims to western lands on the North American continent and to the Rocky Mountains.⁶⁰

In 1823, U.S. Representative Francis Baylies argued that Americans should not accept the Rockies as their nation's natural boundary. In his report to the House of Representatives, Baylies denied that the British had any claims to the territory.⁶¹ "If we

⁵³ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 11-12.

⁵⁴ Merk, *Oregon Question*, 40-1.

⁵⁵ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 13.

⁵⁶ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 51.

⁵⁷ EE to Upshur (No. 69), 2 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁵⁸ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 41.

⁵⁹ Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*, 4.

⁶⁰ Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 56.

⁶¹ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 66.

reach the Rocky Mountains,” he claimed, “we should be unwise did we not pass that narrow space which separates the mountains from the ocean ... our [America’s] natural boundary is the Pacific Ocean. The swelling tide of our population must and will roll on until that mighty ocean interposes its waters, and limits our territorial empire.”⁶² While many Americans in the 1820s did not feel that the Oregon territory would prove necessary to the future of the United States, people like Baylies understood that with the acquisition of this land, the United States would gain ports on the Pacific Ocean and, thus, access to commercial opportunities in China and other parts of Asia.⁶³ Thomas H. Benton did agree with Baylies’s idea, wanting the United States to acquire Oregon as a strategic trading post with India.⁶⁴

The next year, in 1824, the American Minister in Great Britain, Richard Rush, met with British Colonial Secretary William Huskisson and Stratford Canning to discuss, among other issues, a settlement of the Oregon boundary. During the course of the discussions, Great Britain again rejected Rush’s offer to run the boundary at the forty-ninth parallel. Although these talks lasted several months, they made no changes to the Convention of 1818.⁶⁵

In 1826, two years before the 1818 agreement to joint occupation expiration, the nations again entered into negotiations to draw a line separating their holdings in the Pacific Northwest. To this conference, which began on November 15, the United States elected Albert Gallatin, and the British chose William Huskisson and Henry U. Addington as negotiators. Gallatin offered the British negotiators what historian

⁶² *Annals of Congress*, 17th Cong., 2d sess., cols. 682-3, quoted in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 57.

⁶³ Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 58.

⁶⁴ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 12.

⁶⁵ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 63.

Frederick Merk aptly calls “the old American offer – the undeviating line of the 49th parallel.”⁶⁶ He based some of his argument for this line on the Nootka Sound Treaty, which, he claimed, had opened up the entire Pacific Northwest to all nations for trade and settlement.⁶⁷ During this conference, Gallatin argued that the United States had strong claims to the Oregon Territory, especially the section of that area below the forty-ninth parallel. He cited U.S. discovery of the mouth of the Columbia River, American exploration of “the interior waters of the river,” and the Lewis and Clark expedition as evidence to the validity of U.S. claims.⁶⁸ He did realize, though, that America’s rights to the area were not ironclad. To combat this problem, Gallatin turned occasionally to moralistic arguments for the land, arguing that United States citizens seemed to move westward constantly. Thus, he contended, the United States needed the land.⁶⁹ Britain declined Gallatin’s offer of the forty-ninth, which would, among other concerns, “sever the tip of Vancouver Island and place the entire straits south of the truncated island within the United States.”⁷⁰

At this conference, the British also offered a compromise, which would set the boundary along the forty-ninth parallel until it reached the northeast branch of the Columbia River. From there, the boundary would travel down the middle of the river to the Pacific Ocean.⁷¹ The proposal also included an enclave on the Straits of Juan de Fuca, which would give the United States access to the sea.⁷² When the United States

⁶⁶ Merk, *Oregon Question*, 164.

⁶⁷ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 69.

⁶⁸ Merk, *Oregon Question*, 164-5.

⁶⁹ Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 137.

⁷⁰ Merk, *Oregon Question*, 167.

⁷¹ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 335.

⁷² Merk, “British Party Politics,” 654; EE to Upshur (No. 69), 2 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, volume 47; EE to Aberdeen, 30 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

rejected the offer, the negotiators extended the solution of a joint occupation indefinitely in 1827. The nations further agreed regarding to the Oregon Territory that:

It shall be competent, however, to either of the contracting parties, in case either should think fit, at any time after the 20th of October, 1828, on giving due notice of twelve months to the other contracting party, to annul and abrogate this convention; and it shall in such case be accordingly entirely annulled and abrogated after the expiration of the said term of notice.⁷³

Again with no permanent solution, the boundary dispute went to arbitration in 1827 by the King of the Netherlands. In 1831, the United States refused to recognize the decision of the King, and Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary at the time, allowed the United States to retreat from the arbitration process, believing that the British could gain more land through another negotiation.⁷⁴ In the late 1830s and early 1840s, the United States began to press this issue again, as Americans started to settle in the disputed region.

By the time Everett arrived in London in 1841, U.S. claims to the Oregon Territory rested predominately south of the Columbia River.⁷⁵ Neither nation thought much about Spanish claims to the unsettled portions of the North American continent.⁷⁶ Both desired to control the area of land between the Columbia River and the forty-ninth parallel, and after decades of indecision and joint occupation in the area, the region's growing population and several other issues combined to make the Oregon Territory a volatile area.⁷⁷ Once in England, Everett had several potentially dangerous international

⁷³ James D. Richardson, comp. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents: Polk*. [book on-line] Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896-1899; available from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12463/12463-h/12463-h.htm>: Internet.

⁷⁴ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 49.

⁷⁵ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 41.

⁷⁶ EE to Upshur (No. 69), 2 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁷⁷ John A. Munroe, *Louis McLane: Federalist and Jacksonian*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1913), 517.

issues to handle. Yet, he put a special focus on resolving the Oregon boundary question. Much like the northeastern boundary dispute, the United States and Great Britain had debated the true ownership of this territory for many decades, and it proved an issue of much concern to Everett.

CHAPTER 4

INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS

When Webster and Ashburton signed the Treaty of Washington, the Northwestern boundary concerning the Oregon Territory remained unresolved. The two negotiators had made a minor attempt to extend the boundary from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean, but neither cared much about solving the Oregon question. Lord Ashburton's less than vigorous efforts to settle the Oregon question did not impress Lord Aberdeen, who had wanted Ashburton to include it in the Webster-Ashburton treaty.¹

Thus, Edward Everett turned his attention to the Oregon boundary question. Until Aberdeen informed him in early October 1842, Everett did not know that the Peel Government had given Lord Ashburton instructions to try to settle the Oregon issue.² Aberdeen told Everett that he had that he had indeed given Ashburton full instructions on the Oregon question and scarcely knew why it had not been made the subject of at least an attempted arrangement.³ The Foreign Secretary assured Everett that he "was most fully interested on that matter," and that he had considerable regret that the negotiations concerning the Oregon question had failed.⁴ Everett, along with Peel, regretted that the negotiators had, yet again, postponed the difficult issue. At this point, Everett remained very confident that, with the goodwill established by the treaty, the British would accept "almost any fair proposal" concerning the Oregon Territory.⁵

¹ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

² 1 October 1842, EE to DW, (Private), Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

³ EE to DW (Private), 17 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

⁴ EE to DW (Private), 1 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3; EE to DW (Private), 17 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45; EE to DW, 2 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

⁵ EE to DW (Private), 21 August 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 2.

Everett, on Aberdeen's suggestion, asked the Tyler administration for the authority and instructions necessary for him to negotiate with the British on the Oregon boundary, telling Secretary of State Webster that he would give his "best attention to it."⁶ While Everett waited for a reply, Lord Aberdeen and Sir Robert Peel continued to express their regret that this had point received such little attention during the negotiations. They both realized that with that opportunity lost, "There was little prospect of agreeing as to the boundary west of the Rocky Mountains...before the settlement of the country increases the difficulty of an agreement," Peel lamented.⁷ Aberdeen still held hope for a resolution of the question, and looked toward Webster, Everett, and Tyler to work with him to solve the boundary dispute quickly.⁸ Aberdeen felt that the two nations needed, at the very least, some sort of temporary arrangement to maintain a status quo in the area.⁹

By the end of the Webster-Ashburton negotiations, Everett believed that he had earned Aberdeen's trust and "possessed his entire confidence."¹⁰ The conversations and communication between the two men remained amicable and flowed easily throughout Everett's time in Great Britain. In October 1842, Aberdeen shared with Everett an arrangement of the Northwestern boundary that Great Britain might agree to: the United States would "come down as far South as the Columbia River, and make that stream their boundary on the North and Northwest, in consideration of some extension to the South to be obtained from Mexico, so as to give us another port in that direction."¹¹ Thus,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ EE to DW (No. 19), 1 August 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 44.

⁸ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 33.

⁹ EE to DW (Private), 17 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

¹⁰ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

¹¹ EE to DW (Private), 17 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

Aberdeen worked proactively for a settlement that satisfied both parties, setting aside fears that the United States might occupy the undefined parts of the Oregon Territory, which, he informed Everett, would cause uneasy feelings between their nations and hurt the value of the Webster-Ashburton treaty.¹² Webster answered Everett's request for instructions on the topic vaguely, telling him that President Tyler, like the British officials, wanted to settle all problems concerning the Oregon Territory's boundary.¹³

During this period, the two nations made little progress in determining which nation owned title to areas within the Oregon Territory, even though Webster knew that a boundary similar to the one Aberdeen had described to Everett had been suggested. Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic started to think that the question might find a resolution through another attempt at arbitration. "A division of the land," Webster believed, might naturally suggest the Columbia River as a line of division.¹⁴ He felt, though, that Great Britain wanted a good harbor in the Straits of Juan de Fuca in addition to access to the Columbia River, which would enable them to transport furs and other goods, and their retention of Vancouver's Island.

In mid-November 1842, Aberdeen told Everett about his recent dispatch to Henry Fox, the British Minister in Washington, in which he had instructed Fox to tell President Tyler that the British wanted to begin negotiations immediately concerning the boundary or risk the good relations resulting from the Treaty of Washington.¹⁵ Bluntly, Aberdeen asserted repeatedly that he did not want any problems with the Oregon question, but

¹² Ibid.

¹³ DW to EE (Private), 28 November 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ EE to DW (No. 28), 18 November 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

“things stood so in that quarter that trouble might happen at any time.”¹⁶ Aberdeen’s predictions came true when Tyler, in his December 6, 1842 annual message, noted his disappointment that the treaty had not included a settlement of the Oregon Territory. A “tide of population,” Tyler asserted, “has reclaimed what was so lately an unbroken wilderness in more contiguous regions is preparing to flow over those vast districts which stretch from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁷ In the opening of his address to Congress, a sound statement of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, Tyler called for a settlement of the claims of the two nations before the U.S. government granted any Americans individual rights to these lands. Tyler also said that the Webster-Ashburton negotiations failed to discuss fully a settlement of the boundary and that much compromise remained necessary to end the dispute.

Then, Tyler’s message switched to a more menacing tone: “Although the difficulty [concerning the Oregon Territory] referred to may not for several years to come involve the peace of the two countries, yet I shall not delay to urge on Great Britain the importance of its early settlement.”¹⁸ He warned that England needed to work with the United States to “cement the peace and amity of the two countries by wisely removing all grounds of probable future collision.”¹⁹ This message upset many in Britain, many of whom believed that U.S. President’s annual messages often forecasted U.S. foreign policy correctly.²⁰ Historian Edward Crapol attempts to explain the British disgust at Tyler’s speech. “The president claimed all of Oregon as an American possession,”

¹⁶ EE to DW (Private), 1 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

¹⁷ James D. Richardson, comp. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents: Tyler*. [book on-line] Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896-1899; available from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12464/12464-h/12464-h.htm>: Internet.

¹⁸ Richardson, *Messages and Papers: Tyler*.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 30.

which, Crapol argues “totally negated the existing Anglo-American joint occupation agreement and overlooked the fact that Britain had as much claim to this territory as did the United States.”²¹ Lord Aberdeen, for one, disliked the bold American claims and the “slippery” manner in which Tyler presented them.²²

Weeks after Tyler’s incendiary statement, Senator Lewis Linn introduced a bill to occupy, settle, and extend territorial government into the Oregon Territory. It would also allow the United States to sell land in that area.²³ Shortly after, the Senate passed the bill, which had the main purpose of assisting United States settlers moving into the Columbia River valley.²⁴ Again, Aberdeen’s prediction that the U.S. Congress would shortly vote to occupy the Oregon Territory, which would, he claimed, “kindle very uneasy feelings, & greatly impair the value of the lately concluded treaty, in its influence in the public mind, as a general arrangement of the controversies between the two countries,” came true.²⁵ Tyler’s annual message of 1842, combined with the U.S. approval of organizing the Territory increasingly upset the British and heightened the importance of the Oregon boundary controversy.

After Tyler’s annual message and the passage of the bill organizing the Oregon territory, Everett’s focus on this contentious issue increased. Everett worried that the British press only validated Britain’s claims in Oregon. He cited to Webster a *London Times* article of December 3, which supported his argument. In this note to the editor, a British man who had lived in the Oregon Territory for several years as an employee of Hudson’s Bay Company first provided a very pro-British history of the area. He then

²¹ Crapol, *John Tyler*, 118-9.

²² Ibid.

²³ Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 58.

²⁴ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 109.

²⁵ EE to DW (Private), 17 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

argued that the commercial interests of the American “intruders” would likely hurt the Hudson’s Bay Company, “the source of so much wealth to British commerce.”²⁶ The article further warned readers that if the British did not take action in the region while peaceful feelings still existed from the Treaty of Washington, then Americans, “always on the watch for opportunities of extending their sway,” would overrun the region, making it “pregnant with mischief and injury to England.”²⁷ Even after considering this argument, Everett felt little urgency to insist the British government settle the dispute.²⁸

According to Lord Aberdeen, Henry Fox had conversed with Webster, who told the British minister that President Tyler also desired a “prompt adjustment” of the boundary and that Webster would send a communication to Everett on the subject.²⁹ This made Aberdeen think that Webster intended to give Everett the power to negotiate with him for the settlement of the boundary.³⁰ Although without this official power to enter into negotiations with Aberdeen, Everett consulted on this issue regularly with Aberdeen, whose opinions on the topic he found very reasonable. Aberdeen reacted positively to his explanation of Webster’s previously proposed demarcation, which started on the Pacific Ocean, moved through the Straits of Juan de Fuca, which gave the United States a harbor at the Southwest corner of the straits, continued below Vancouver Island, then followed along the Columbia River, until its interception with the forty-ninth parallel.³¹

Early in January 1843, Everett met with Aberdeen again to discuss the Oregon Territory. The two first discussed Tyler’s recent message to Congress. Aberdeen

²⁶ *Times* (London), 3 December 1842.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ EE to DW (Private), 3 December 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3.

²⁹ EE to DW, 2 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ DW to EE (Private), 28 November 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3; EE to DW, 2 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

showed his disappointment at Tyler's comments concerning Oregon. Aberdeen explained to Everett that Britain had proposed early settlement of the boundary when they first realized that Lord Ashburton and Webster had not settled it. He [Aberdeen] went on to say that, "it was not the practice of the Queen to make a long speech at the opening of parliament; if it were, they should be compelled to advise her Majesty to use a different language from that of the Message on all these points."³² In March, Aberdeen reemphasized that he felt the two nations would not have "any great difficulty" about settling Oregon.³³ Yet, Aberdeen did not like the U.S. idea of combining Oregon with other conflicts in an agreement that could include a revision of trade laws and tariffs between the two nations, a relaxation of the trade restrictions between the British West Indies and the United States, and possibly even American troubles with Mexico. Combining these dissimilar subjects into a comprehensive arrangement, he thought, would prove too difficult.³⁴

By mid 1843, Everett contemplated adding an article about Oregon in one of the major London papers, even though he had a low opinion of the liberal press in England after their many inflammatory articles about the northeastern boundary.³⁵ Still with no formal power to negotiate the boundary, Everett continued to hold informal discussions with Aberdeen on the topic. Although he had no official authority, Everett pressed upon the Foreign Secretary, in June 1843, the importance of drawing the boundary of the Oregon Territory at the forty-ninth parallel, as he believed that the United States

³² EE to DW (Confidential), 1 February 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8 (B), Folder 4.

³³ EE to DW (Private), 1 March 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 45.

³⁴ EE to Upshur, 30 August 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

³⁵ EE to Ogden, 29 May 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

government would not consent to a boundary lower than that.³⁶ More than any of the several other occasions when he had made the same suggestion about the boundary line, Everett felt that Aberdeen tolerated the suggestion quite well.

As the summer of 1843 passed, Everett grew frustrated with the lack of action on the part of the Tyler administration regarding the northwestern boundary.³⁷ In reaction to a comment by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons on August 10, 1843, Everett asked Aberdeen if the British government intended to wait for the United States to offer a boundary line. Aberdeen affirmed that the Peel administration wanted action on the question of the Oregon territory, which it recognized as an urgent matter. Peel and Aberdeen also discussed Webster's resignation from the State Department. The two leaders questioned how personnel changes in Tyler's administration would affect the previous efforts by Webster to inform Aberdeen, through Everett, about a possible special mission to London, which some in Washington had suggested. The British awaited some communication from the United States on this topic.³⁸

Everett also awaited instructions from the United States, telling Aberdeen that President Tyler and many in the U.S. executive department felt that the negotiation should take place in Washington.³⁹ He asked Aberdeen if the British would consider sending another special mission to the United States with the specific purpose of settling the outstanding problem. Aberdeen disliked the option and did not want to rely on the British Minister in Washington, Henry Fox, for whom most Americans had a strong

³⁶ EE to Tyler, 3 June 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

³⁷ EE to Wheaton, 28 July 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

³⁸ EE to Upshur (No. 50), 15 August 1843, Reel 22, Volume 47.

³⁹ Ibid.

distaste.⁴⁰ This, Aberdeen told Everett, would probably impede his ability to manage the compromise for the British. Discussing the subject of a possible negotiation, Aberdeen reiterated to Everett his wish that the U.S. government would charge Everett with leading the Oregon negotiation in London. “Could I hope to bring it to a successful issue, it would of course be very agreeable,” Everett confided to new Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur, “but it seems to me out of the question to carry on such a negotiation any where but at Washington.”⁴¹ While Everett later admitted to feeling much personal disappointment at not receiving full powers to negotiate much sooner, but while Minister, he consistently followed and supported U.S. policy.⁴²

Aberdeen, who had little interest in retaining all of the Oregon Territory for England, understood that both nations wanted an honorable compromise, so as not to embarrass the pride of either.⁴³ Seeking to accomplish a peaceful division of the land, Aberdeen had already attempted through Henry Fox and Everett to reopen a dialogue with the United States on the topic of the Oregon boundary. Yet, President Tyler failed to respond to British calls for negotiations for almost a year after the ratification of the Webster-Ashburton treaty.⁴⁴

Weary of waiting on the Tyler administration to grant Everett official authorization, the Peel Administration instructed Henry Fox in October 1843 to attempt to settle the boundary in Washington, working with the instructions given to Ashburton the previous year.⁴⁵ These directions instructed Fox to draw a boundary line on the

⁴⁰ EE to Upshur (Confidential), 17 August 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

⁴³ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 52; Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 2.

⁴⁴ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 335.

⁴⁵ EE to DW, 3 October 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

Columbia River's northwestern branch, which, Everett purported, had more value for the United States. Lord Aberdeen directed him to "proceed upon the forty ninth parallel of latitude westward, till it strikes the northwesternmost branch of the Columbia river [sic]; and then follow that river to the ocean."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ EE to Upshur (No. 61), 2 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

CHAPTER 5

CONTINUED PUSH FOR FORTY-NINE

On October 9, 1843, only days after the Peel Government ordered Henry Fox to settle the boundary in Washington, President John Tyler finally granted Everett full power to “agree, treat, consult and negotiate...and to conclude and sign a Treaty” concerning the Oregon boundary. Tyler appointed Everett, whose trustworthiness, integrity, and prudence he praised, to promote peace and harmony between the nations.¹ This grant of powers did not include exact instructions as to what the Tyler administration wanted as the boundary. Before Everett received Tyler’s message granting him the power to solve the issue, all of the offers and suggestions that Everett made to the British government concerning the Oregon boundary had no official backing from the United States government.

Tyler’s highly anticipated but delinquent selection of Everett surely disappointed the Minister, who had several reasons to doubt the Tyler administration’s confidence in him. President Tyler showed that he did not trust Everett to carry out his duties for the best interests of the United States through several actions in addition to the extended delay in granting him the full powers to negotiate with the British government on the Oregon issue. One of the principal reasons for Everett’s distrust stemmed from the actions of Duff Green. Tyler sent Green, a journalist and Democrat, to Great Britain in 1843 as a special envoy, especially concerned with trying to bring about a commercial treaty with the British.² Historian Michael F. Holt contends that President Tyler did not

¹ Tyler to Upshur, 9 October 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 4.

² EE to Upshur (Confidential), 17 August 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

trust Everett to carry out his nation's business properly in Great Britain, as he had antislavery sympathies.³

Although Green had no official diplomatic sanction from the U.S. government to make any agreements with the British on any issue, Green met with several of Britain's top politicians, hoping to persuade them to agree to a commercial treaty.⁴ On more than one occasion, Green solicited Everett to introduce him to important people in Great Britain. Throughout Green's time in Great Britain, Everett never knew his exact concerns.⁵ Without specific instructions from Tyler, Everett did not want to assist Green, who threatened Everett's powers and prominence in Great Britain.

Some people in Great Britain, including Everett, felt that Green's arrival and presence in London showed disrespect for Everett.⁶ President Tyler, in July 1843, tried to assuage Everett's feelings with a personal letter. Tyler assured Everett, "He is, in no way to be regarded by the Government of Great Britain as any other than a private citizen of the United States, invested with no authority to open or carry on a correspondence with the Ministry, or, in the slightest manner to speak in the name of this Government."⁷ The President told Everett to let the Peel government know this. Tensions grew even more when, in November 1843, the *Times* referred to Green as a "diplomatic agent" of the United States and connected him with the American legation in Britain.⁸ Everett directed his secretary to inform the papers and correct the impression that Green, in any way, had connections to official U.S. diplomatic efforts in London. Always considerate of public

³ Holt, *Rise and Fall*, 170.

⁴ DW to EE (Private and Confidential), 12 May 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Box 9, Folder 1.

⁵ EE to DW (Private), 18 May 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 1.

⁶ EE to Upshur (Confidential), 17 August 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47; EE to DW (Private), 18 May 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Box 9, Folder 1.

⁷ Tyler to EE (Unofficial), 21 July 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 2.

⁸ EE to Green, 16 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

appearances, Everett informed Green that the correction would be made “in the simplest terms as a matter of fact” and without “any disparaging remarks.”⁹

Another issue that concerned Everett in the same period involved a mission to China. In December 1842, Daniel Webster recommended that Everett head a U.S. diplomatic mission to China with the primary goal of obtaining trading rights on the Chinese mainland.¹⁰ In a private letter to Everett in late January 1843, Webster informed Everett of the proposed mission and told him “if the provision should be ample, and you were in the country, I think I should advise the President to send you to the Celestial Empire. It would be,” he continued, “a mission full of interest, and with your powers of application and attainments you would make great additions to your stock of ideas.”¹¹

On March 3, 1843, Congress authorized \$40,000 for the mission, and eleven days later, President Tyler officially offered Everett the position. This turn of events led several of Webster’s contemporaries to speculate that the Secretary of State had ulterior motives in proposing Everett as U.S. commissioner to China. Lord Ashburton, for one, realized that Webster would soon leave the Tyler administration and speculated that he wanted to travel to London, where he could work with Lord Aberdeen to establish a boundary in the Oregon Territory. Fearing that President Tyler would give Webster restricted powers to negotiate, Ashburton preferred that Everett, whose “candour & honesty I have the very best opinion,” remained Britain’s principal liaison to the United States.¹²

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 577.

¹¹ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 844.

¹² Ashburton to Aberdeen, 1 January 1843, quoted in: Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 26-7.

Several U.S. politicians also saw through “the Secretary’s scheme” to replace Everett as Minister to Great Britain.¹³ Some believed that Webster had intentionally dismissed discussions concerning the Oregon boundary during the Webster-Ashburton negotiations and had compromised too much of Maine’s claim in the Northeastern boundary settlement in order to please the Peel administration.¹⁴ By leaving the Oregon question open, some speculated, Webster hoped to head a special mission or gain the Ministerial post in London, where he would work with the appeased Peel government. Howard Jones and Donald A. Rakestraw point out that these attempts could not ensure Webster would get the appointment, as Everett had no official duty to relinquish his post.¹⁵

John Quincy Adams labeled Webster’s attempt to secure the London post for himself as “the back door by which Webster skillfully secures to himself a safe retreat from the Tyler Cabinet.”¹⁶ Adams believed that Everett would accept the mission, and Webster would immediately ready himself to cross the Atlantic, having created a graceful way of leaving the Tyler administration. Tyler agreed that the China mission gave him an alternative to dismissing Webster from his Cabinet before he attempted to acquire Texas.¹⁷ If Everett declined, then Webster, Adams thought, would “take it himself.”¹⁸

Senator Thomas H. Benton insinuated that the Tyler administration nominated Everett to “enable a gentleman, who loves to travel in Europe and Asia, to extend his

¹³ Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 577.

¹⁴ Jones and Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny*, 129.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ John Q. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848*, ed. Charles F. Adams (12 vols., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 11: 335.

¹⁷ Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 577.

¹⁸ Adams, John Q., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 11: 335.

travels to the Celestial Empire at the expense of the United States, and to write a book.”¹⁹

Benton continued his attack on the mission, implying that Webster had constructed the mission as a way to secure the Ministerial post in London for himself.²⁰ Everett also questioned the Tyler administration’s motives in selecting him to lead the mission, suspecting that the President and Secretary of State wanted to open his diplomatic post so Webster could complete the Oregon negotiations in Britain.²¹ After Everett received the offer, he confided in several friends about his beliefs.²²

Although longtime friends, Webster and Everett obscured their thoughts about the China mission in their personal exchanges. In February, before the Senate approved Everett’s appointment, Webster had intimated his intentions concerning the China mission: “If I knew <*whether*> that you would like our first Oriental Mission, I might think, possibly, of succeeding you, for a year in England.”²³ Thus, Everett knew that Webster had some desire for the mission. Still, Webster denied to Everett several times the rumor that he desired to replace Everett in Britain. In a private letter to Everett on March 10, Webster informed Everett of his appointment, which he described as meeting “universal pleasure” in Congress. He then challenged the rumors:

I believe that the President thinks that there might be some advantages from an undertaking by me, to settle remaining difficulties with England...But in the present state of things I have no wish to go to England – not the slightest. To succeed you in England for the mere purpose of carrying on, for a year or two, the general business of the mission, is what I could not think of. I do not mean, only, that I would not be the occasion of transferring you elsewhere, for any such purpose; but I mean that if the place were vacant, I would not accept an appointment to

¹⁹ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 881.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 32.

²² EE to Denison, 6 April 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46; Brooks to EE, 30 April 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 1.

²³ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 846.

fill it, unless I saw that something might be done, beyond the ordinary routine of duties. At present I see little or no prospect of accomplishing any great objectives.²⁴

After one more promise, in which Webster told Everett, “there is not one chance in a thousand that I should fill it,” the Secretary of State also stressed to Everett how much Tyler wanted him to accept the position to lead the China mission.²⁵ While Webster had previously told Everett that he had “great difficulty in fixing on a proper person” to head the China mission, Webster biographer and historian Robert V. Remini contends that Webster, who did want to lead the Oregon negotiations in London, actually did believe that Everett would also “make the ideal person to head the mission.”²⁶ Kenneth Shewmaker, editor of Webster’s diplomatic correspondence while Tyler’s Secretary of State, agrees with Remini that both Webster and Tyler believed completely in Everett’s ability to lead the important mission.²⁷

Throughout the predicament, Everett also remained very friendly with Webster. He publicly stated his happiness that the State Department had allowed him to choose his own fate and insinuated that Webster’s assurances to decline the Ministerial post, largely due to financial constraints, pleased him.²⁸ Everett showed concern that his declining the mission to China would block Webster from coming to Great Britain. Writing to Robert Winthrop, Everett asserted that “if I thought by remaining here, I prevented his coming, I should, in declining the appointment to China, have tendered the President an unconditional resignation of my place here.”²⁹ While Everett did have some worry that

²⁴ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 897.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 844; Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 577.

²⁷ Webster, *Papers of Daniel Webster, Diplomatic*, 1: 881.

²⁸ EE to Winthrop, 2 June 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

his decision to decline the mission might upset Webster and could dispossess both the British and American publics of “the benefit of his services,” he knew that Webster desired his position, which he did not want to relinquish.³⁰ He felt that Webster wanted to use the China mission as “a bribe to get him out of the way and secure the coveted and politically visible London post” for himself.³¹

Everett clearly enjoyed his time in England. Several of his British friends attempted to persuade Everett to decline the mission. “Courtesy would lead most of my English friends to express themselves against it; and in most cases I consider such expressions as mere courtesy; but...many on whose candor and real friendly interest I think I can depend, express themselves pretty strongly against it,” Everett informed his father-in-law.³² Everett’s social friendships, thus, also affected his decision. Even Lord Aberdeen lamented Everett’s possible early departure. After Everett told him the news, Aberdeen inquired who the United States would send to replace him. Everett responded with Webster’s name, to which the Foreign Secretary reportedly responded, “We desire no change there nor here!”³³

Unsure how to respond to this dilemma, Everett sought the views of his closest friends. To his father-in-law, Everett explained that he felt much pressure to accept the appointment, especially as former President John Q. Adams and some of Everett’s other friends had already begun to urge him to accept the mission.³⁴ Adams felt “much gratified with the appointment of Edward Everett as the Minister to China, deeming the mission of transcendent importance, and deeming him by his character and attainments

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bartlett, “Edward Everett Reconsidered,” 446.

³² EE to Brooks, 14 April 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 112.

peculiarly well suited for it.”³⁵ Everett, with no desire to leave the post, based his official decision to stay on his worry that the trip would require him to leave his family, as they could not travel with him to China. “My acceptance,” Everett maintained, “would be followed by a separation & their return home.... Whether I am warranted to leave them for so long a time, my children being almost all of ages when a father’s care is most important I greatly doubt.”³⁶ Everett received the parental advice he sought some weeks later when Brooks counseled Everett to reject Tyler’s offer.

On April 18, after many weeks of consideration, Everett declined the appointment as Minister to China, informing President Tyler of the fact that he would have had to leave and move his family.³⁷ Many of Everett’s friends on both sides of the Atlantic rejoiced when they heard he had declined the assignment. Joseph Story, the U.S. Supreme Court justice from Everett’s home state, delighted in hearing that he had decided to remain in London. “It would, after all,” Story observed, “have been but an honorable banishment – You are in the very position where you ought to be, & deserve to be – surrounded by all the interesting objects of ‘that Land of Scholars & that muse of Arms’ – I am proud that America can in one of her own scholars show, that he not only can represent his Country in the most exalted manner, but that he can adorn her feasts & her festivals by his Genius & Eloquence.”³⁸ Throughout the months long trial that seemed to set the Everett and Webster in opposition, their relationship remained strong, as Everett decided to “excuse Webster for being ‘terribly selfish’ and entertaining ideas

³⁵ Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 11: 337.

³⁶ EE to Brooks, 3 April 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Box 9, Folder 1.

³⁷ EE to Tyler (Private), 18 April 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Box 9, Folder 1.

³⁸ Story to EE, 14 June 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 2.

‘of supplanting me’ and ‘discrediting me.’”³⁹ Thus, Everett remained the U.S. representative in Great Britain.

With these setbacks, Tyler’s granting him full powers to negotiate the Oregon question likely surprised Everett, who, along with Lord Aberdeen, had politely requested such authority more than a year before it actually came. Still, when word reached Everett of this show of trust, he thanked Tyler heartily. “I am bound gratefully to acknowledge the proofs I have received of your distinguished kindness,” Everett gushed.⁴⁰ “The appointment to China, a mission of the most eminent delicacy and importance, and the authority to negotiate upon the Oregon boundary, a trust scarcely less important and delicate, are tokens of your distinguished and continued confidence, entitled to my warmest acknowledgement.”⁴¹

Even so, the Tyler administration had left him largely uninformed of its goals concerning the Oregon territory. Finally, Everett received and acknowledged his full authorization concerning the Oregon issue in a dispatch from Secretary of State Upshur on October 30.⁴² Everett immediately told Aberdeen, who had, on several occasions, requested that President Tyler give Everett the power to negotiate. When Everett informed Aberdeen that Tyler had authorized him to negotiate the Oregon question, “Lord Aberdeen informed me that such an arrangement would have been altogether agreeable to him if somewhat earlier made, and reminded me that he had very often, in

³⁹ EE to DW, 3 April 1843, quoted in: Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 578.

⁴⁰ EE to Tyler, 3 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² EE to Upshur (No. 60), 1 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

the course of the last winter, expressed the wish that the President would authorize me to treat on the subject.”⁴³

Aberdeen had already made an irreversible decision concerning the Oregon question. He had decided to replace the irritable and hostile British Minister Henry Fox. Fox did not receive the news for several weeks, and when Aberdeen’s orders arrived from London, they told Fox that “there is too much reason to apprehend that your Relations with the American Govt. are not such as to contribute to the prospect of a happy result. We cannot send another special Mission; and under these circumstances, it has been thought expedient for the publick [sic] service that your place at Washington should be supplied by Mr. Pakenham.”⁴⁴ Aberdeen believed that with a new, more amicable British diplomat in the United States, the reopened negotiations should occur in Washington. Everett agreed reluctantly, stating that in Washington, the negotiators could easily consult the opinions of the U.S. Senators who would later have to ratify any negotiations.⁴⁵ Aberdeen stressed to Everett that he had only resolved to take this action after he “had entirely given up the expectation that I should be authorized to treat on this subject, not only in consequence of my not receiving powers; but Mr. Fox having latterly written them, that the President had decided that the negotiation must be at Washington.”⁴⁶

As a skilled diplomat, Everett refrained from showing any public disappointment in regards to the tardiness of Tyler’s bequest of full powers and Great Britain’s decision to begin new negotiations in Washington. Instead, he thanked Tyler for his vote of

⁴³ EE to Upshur (No. 61) (Confidential), 2 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 28.

⁴⁵ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

⁴⁶ EE to Upshur (No. 61) (Confidential), 2 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

confidence by granting him full powers to act.⁴⁷ Privately, Everett lamented that “the negotiations passed out of my hands.”⁴⁸ Still, he promised to work tirelessly and with zeal to continue working towards America’s goals in London, even if his other public duties received less notoriety than negotiating the boundary.

Upon learning that Aberdeen planned to reopen the Oregon question in Washington, Everett took the initiative in planning to create a communication for Aberdeen that examined the issue. Everett hoped that his upcoming letter would influence Lord Aberdeen’s instructions to Fox’s replacement.⁴⁹ Everett believed that having an impact on those instructions would prove “much more important and beneficial, than any effect to be produced afterwards on the mind of the minister himself, restrained as he will be by his instructions, - and disposed as a matter of national feeling to adhere to them.”⁵⁰

In an interview on November 6, Everett talked to Aberdeen about the instructions to Richard Pakenham, Fox’s replacement in Washington.⁵¹ In what Everett later referred to as a “long and upon the whole, quite...satisfactory conversation with Lord Aberdeen,” the two men discussed Pakenham’s succession as British Minister in Washington, and Aberdeen assured Everett of the new appointee’s conciliatory character.⁵² Then, their conversation turned to the Oregon question. Aberdeen expressed hope that Pakenham would have success in the negotiations. The Foreign Secretary also remarked that the posts occupied by the Hudson’s Bay Company located south of the forty-ninth parallel

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

⁴⁹ EE to Upshur (Private & Confidential), 3 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁵⁰ EE to Upshur (No. 61) (Confidential), 2 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁵¹ EE to Upshur (Private & Confidential), 16 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁵² EE to Upshur, 14 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

since 1818 “ought not to prejudice the claims of the United States.”⁵³ Everett again stressed to Aberdeen the fairness of the forty-ninth parallel as the logical boundary. This offer was “founded on the obvious and natural principles of distribution.”⁵⁴ Britain’s insistence on the Columbia River was not based upon any such principle but simply a boundary favorable to the British.

Everett continued to press Aberdeen to adopt the forty-ninth parallel as the line for an Anglo-American compromise. Everett argued that scientists could always ascertain the lines of latitude. Also, he noted that the two nations had not suffered any problems with the forty-ninth parallel as a boundary for many miles east of the Rocky Mountains. The British, he said, would also gain access to “a broad sound indented with bays and inlets with several good rivers communicating with the interior on which the Hudson’s Bay settlement were already numerous and I believe increasing.”⁵⁵ Finally, in support of the forty-ninth parallel, Everett pointed out to Aberdeen that this parallel divided the Oregon Territory, which spanned from the forty-second to the fifty-fourth, forty-minute line, almost exactly in half.

Everett believed that an arrangement based on these terms treated both nations with respect. Understanding that Great Britain had declined this offer three times, in 1818, 1824, and 1826, Everett hoped that President Tyler might “agree to give up the Southern extremity of Quadra & [all of] Vancouver’s Island...on condition that the entrance of the Straits of Juan de Fuca should at all times be left open and free to the United States with a free navigation between that island and the main land and a free

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

outlet to the North.”⁵⁶ These allowances by the British, Everett assumed, would more than likely compensate them for the “Southern point of an island [Quadra] of which the greater part would fall within the share of England,” especially since the southern tip of Quadra would give Great Britain control of the Straits of Fuca.⁵⁷

Late in November, Everett again met with Aberdeen, and their conversation turned quickly to acceptable terms concerning the Oregon Territory. As in their earlier meeting, Everett endeavored to impress his ideas about the boundary on Aberdeen, hoping that they might influence his instructions to Pakenham.⁵⁸ Aberdeen, too, reemphasized his belief that both sides had to make new concessions in order for an honorable settlement to occur.⁵⁹ Referring back to the 1826-1827 negotiations, Everett hoped to reinforce the idea that the United States had already mentioned the forty-ninth degree as a boundary, and he told Aberdeen that he hoped it would serve as the final basis of the settlement.⁶⁰

Britain had rejected American proposals along this parallel three times before.⁶¹ Aberdeen did not, Everett believed, want to agree to the same conditions that Great Britain had rejected during earlier negotiation attempts. Everett took it upon himself, without prior approval from the Tyler administration to propose a modification, to alter the former U.S. offer by relinquishing U.S. claims to “the southern portion of Quadra and Vancouver’s Island.”⁶² This offer proves very interesting to the British and later becomes the centerpiece of the Oregon Treaty. Before Everett made this unofficial offer, the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ EE to Upshur (No. 69), 2 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, volume 47.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ EE to Lord Aberdeen, 30 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁶¹ EE to DW, 28 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48; Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 45.

⁶² EE to DW, 28 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48.

British worried that they would lose these two areas, which they had already populated, if they agreed to the forty-ninth parallel with no change. Everett thought that while the English would prize this compromise, it would not hurt the U.S. position very much. Explaining his thoughts to Webster, Everett confided in him that, although he found himself “full of anxiety for the result,” he thought that both governments might agree to this arrangement, which resembled an offer that Albert Gallatin had made in 1826.⁶³

Many U.S. politicians felt that the Peel Ministry’s appointment of Richard Pakenham, who had served for many years as the British Minister in Mexico, made a good replacement for Henry Fox. Everett felt sure that the Peel administration had replaced Fox with Pakenham to “give new and favorable impulse to the negotiation on the subject of the Oregon boundary.”⁶⁴ Everett also held a very high opinion of Pakenham, describing him as a “quiet, amiable, [and] well disposed gentleman,” who, he felt, would take warm feelings with him to the United States.⁶⁵ Robert Winthrop could not hide his excitement and anticipation at receiving the new British Minister. Although he knew nothing about the former British Minister to Mexico, Fox’s recall elated him. Like many government officials in Washington, Winthrop described Fox as a cipher, or a nobody, who “mingled not at all in society & admitting nobody within his doors.”⁶⁶ Everett noted to many of his friends that Pakenham’s presence would greatly enhance the possibility of their two nations settling the Oregon issue. To Robert Winthrop, Everett said, “he goes to Washington with the purpose of discharging his duty to his own

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ EE to Ashburton, 28 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48.

⁶⁵ EE to Davis, 17 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁶⁶ Winthrop to EE, 12 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 4.

government, in the manner most conciliatory to the U. States.”⁶⁷ Writing to Abbott Lawrence, a Massachusetts Whig, Everett added that the newly appointed Pakenham had manners in “the precise opposite of his predecessor, being apparently a plain good tempered, kind-hearted man, seriously bent on doing good and averting mischief, which appears to me the great duty of a Foreign Minister.”⁶⁸

In late 1843 and early 1844, Pakenham readied for the mission, received his instructions from Lord Aberdeen, and crossed the Atlantic Ocean on his way to Washington.⁶⁹ Concurrently, the United States Congress, reported Winthrop, had started to act “terribly rowdy” concerning the Oregon Territory. “The Western members are very restive about Oregon, & we shall have hard work to hold them in until M. Pakenham arrives,” Winthrop confided to Everett.⁷⁰ Pakenham reached the United States on February 13 and received a kind welcome.⁷¹

Many Americans hoped that Pakenham’s conciliatory demeanor towards the United States would lead to quick negotiations with Secretary of State Upshur, who had replaced Webster in 1843. This optimism lasted for only a short time, for Secretary of State Upshur died tragically aboard U.S. warship, the *Princeton*, when its twelve-inch gun, the Peacemaker, blew up and killed him on February 28, 1844.⁷² Upshur’s unexpected death, which Everett called “a thunderbolt from a clear sky,” further delayed meetings to negotiate the Oregon boundary.⁷³ News of President Polk’s replacement in the State Department, John C. Calhoun, took weeks to arrive in Great Britain. As Everett

⁶⁷ EE to Winthrop, 4 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁶⁸ EE to Lawrence, 19 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁶⁹ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 335.

⁷⁰ Winthrop to EE, 29 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁷¹ Pakenham to EE, 27 February 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁷² Bancroft to EE, 1 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1; Monroe, *Republican Vision of John Tyler*, 172.

⁷³ EE to DW, 3 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

awaited the official announcement, he worried that the delay in announcing a replacement might affect negotiations on the Oregon question.⁷⁴

Pakenham, much like Everett, made friends easily during his diplomatic tenure in the United States. Robert Winthrop took to him quickly, reporting to Everett that he met with Pakenham frequently and enjoyed his company.⁷⁵ Always the diplomat, Pakenham thanked Everett for the letters of introduction he had provided as he left for Washington and for the high regard that Everett had, on several occasions, expressed for him.⁷⁶

Everett remained very interested in Pakenham's instructions and goals. On April 1, 1844, he asked Webster about the British Minister's advancement of the Oregon question. "I am very desirous," he proclaimed, "of learning, if I can, what may be Mr Pakenham's instructions, as to Oregon. If you know any thing, not confidentially communicated...give me a hint – it will not be imprudently used."⁷⁷ In the spring of 1844, Lord Aberdeen had given Pakenham further instructions to try to secure an American agreement to the forty-ninth parallel while securing Vancouver's Island for the British.⁷⁸

While working with Aberdeen on Oregon, Everett continued to investigate the subject's long and complicated past. He called on his good friend and fellow diplomat Washington Irving, the U.S. Minister in Spain for information about the Nootka Sound Convention in 1790 between Spain and Great Britain. Called after the Spanish overran Nootka, a British trading post, this conference helped reduce tension between the two

⁷⁴ EE to Calhoun, 3 May 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 49.

⁷⁵ Winthrop to EE, 29 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

⁷⁶ Pakenham to EE, 5 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁷⁷ DW to EE, 1 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

⁷⁸ Aberdeen to Pakenham, 4 March 1844, quoted in Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 335.

nations in the late eighteenth century.⁷⁹ Spain, which had claimed sovereignty of the Pacific Northwest as far north as the sixty-first parallel, established by a treaty from the reign of King Charles II in 1692, recognized British claims to the region. Everett requested Irving's help in getting copies of Spanish documents concerning the Nootka Sound Convention, as "it might very materially aid us as now representing the rights of Spain in that quarter."⁸⁰ Pakenham intended to arrive in the United States in late January or early February 1844, and Everett hoped that he would find out more about the Spanish documents before Aberdeen gave the new Minister his final instructions.

Everett held little hope that the Spanish documents he wanted to find in the French archives in Paris still existed. When the documents were created in 1790, the Spanish and English, worried about the French Revolution, "hastened an adjustment of the Nootka Controversy without further reference to France on the part of Spain."⁸¹ Still, Everett held some faith that Spain had sent copies of these documents, concerning proofs of the Spanish title to the lands in question, to France.

After searching for the documents, Irving informed Everett that he had uncovered nothing of interest, as he only found a document that said the papers had sunk to the bottom of the Guadalquivir River while on a transport ship running from Seville to Cadiz in 1823.⁸² Months after Irving's reply, Everett stumbled upon a report of the negotiations that occurred between Spain and Great Britain in 1790 that resulted in the Nootka Sound Convention. This privately printed but unpublished report, "A narrative of the negotiations occasioned by the dispute between England and Spain in the year 1790,"

⁷⁹ Jones and Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny*, 152.

⁸⁰ EE to Irving, 31 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 47.

⁸¹ EE to Ledyard, 24 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Everett informed new Secretary of State John C. Calhoun, indicated that the Spanish Minister at the time, Count Florida Blanca, never entered an argument concerning Spanish holdings in the Pacific Northwest.⁸³ Count Florida Blanca, Everett's discovered document revealed, clearly felt that the sixty-first parallel was their boundary in the area.⁸⁴ Everett hoped that he could use this additional information to strengthen the United States claim to the Oregon Territory north of the forty-ninth parallel.

President Tyler, on the other hand, did not search for clear information on such matters before making claims for the United States in Oregon. In early December 1843, Tyler gave his Annual Message, which included a discussion of the disputed Oregon Territory. Tyler asserted strongly that American citizens, always ready to increase their nation's size, would not surrender U.S. rights to the area.⁸⁵ He also "reaffirmed the American claim to the entire territory between forty-two degrees and fifty-four degrees, forty minutes of latitude and called for the erection of military posts."⁸⁶ Tyler recommended that the United States establish laws for the many Americans settling in the area.⁸⁷ Great Britain disagreed with much of what Tyler asserted, but Lord Aberdeen's calm attitude helped ease tensions between the two nations.⁸⁸

As 1843 ended, Everett contacted Webster concerning Pakenham. The reason for Pakenham's appointment, Everett concluded, stemmed from Aberdeen's attempt "to give a new and favorable impulse to the negotiation on the Oregon boundary, Lord Aberdeen being well aware, that there was no hope of doing anything with Mr. Fox."⁸⁹ Everett

⁸³ EE to Calhoun (No. 152), 29 June 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 49.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Richardson, *Messages and Papers: Tyler*.

⁸⁶ Monroe, *Republican Vision of John Tyler*, 170.

⁸⁷ Richardson, *Messages and Papers: Tyler*.

⁸⁸ Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 2.

⁸⁹ EE to DW, 28 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48.

believed that Webster's prestige would allow him to influence Pakenham. He wrote several letters of introduction for Pakenham to some of his closest friends in the United States, including Webster, Winthrop, Charles Ingersoll, and John Q. Adams.⁹⁰ In these letters, Everett emphasized Pakenham's conciliatory attitude towards the United States as a great benefit for the upcoming negotiations in Washington.

By spring 1844, the question of the Oregon boundary had gained some interest in the United States political arena. Robert Winthrop informed Everett that many in the House of Representatives, including Charles Ingersoll and Rufus Choate, had increased their interest in the Oregon territory.⁹¹ Winthrop also felt that his recent Oregon speech in the House of Representatives had upset several politicians. In the March 18 speech, Winthrop called the Oregon dispute a "national question" instead of an issue that only impacted Western states.⁹² He then furthered his point:

A mere western interest! Sir, I doubt whether the West has a particle of real interest in the possession of Oregon. It may have an interest – a momentary, seeming, delusive interest – in a war for Oregon. Doubtless, the western States might reap a rich harvest of spoils in the prosecution of such a war. Doubtless, there would be fat contracts of all sorts growing out of such a contest, which would enure [sic] to their peculiar advantage. Doubtless, the characteristic spirit of the western people – that spirit of restless adventure, and roving enterprise, and daring conflict...would find ample room and verge enough for its indulgence, even to satisfy, in such a campaign.⁹³

Continuing in this vein, Winthrop's incendiary message stirred up much opposition.

Winthrop furthered to Everett that one politician said, concerning his speech, that "there was nothing on earth or in hell so black [as] the tongue that could utter such a pack of

⁹⁰ EE to DW, Winthrop, Ingersoll, Archer, and Curtis, 4 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 48.

⁹¹ Winthrop to EE, 27 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁹² *Congressional Globe*, 28th Cong., 1st sess., Appendix, 318.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

falsehoods.”⁹⁴ Everett, contrarily, praised Winthrop’s Oregon Speech, and he passed it to Lord Aberdeen on May 17, 1844.⁹⁵ As American political parties started to debate the Oregon question, Everett and Winthrop’s interest in the issue grew. “The tone of debate & the temper of parties,” Winthrop said about the Oregon debate in the United States, “is bad beyond description at this moment.”⁹⁶

Everett and Winthrop, among others, wanted a quick and satisfactory adjustment of the Oregon boundary. Yet, the excitement concerning American attempts to annex Texas largely overshadowed the Oregon question, especially when Secretary of State John C. Calhoun’s 1844 letter to Pakenham on the subject of slavery in Texas spurred enormous opposition to the annexation treaty.⁹⁷ This distraction from the Oregon question irritated Everett and Richard Pakenham, who sensed that politicians in Washington had little interest in the Oregon issue. Calhoun’s belief that “wise and masterly inactivity” would eventually allow Americans to expand westward and “inevitable engulf the territory in dispute” also impeded the Oregon negotiations.⁹⁸

This disinterest surprised Pakenham, considering the harsh annual messages of Tyler concerning the Oregon territory.⁹⁹ In addition to the setbacks caused by the Texas issue, the negotiations also slowed when Secretary of State Calhoun informed Pakenham that the United States would not accept any compromise less than the forty-ninth parallel. Aberdeen also worried that if he offered the compromise he had discussed with Everett

⁹⁴ Winthrop to EE, 27 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁹⁵ EE to Aberdeen, 21 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁹⁶ Winthrop to EE, 27 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁹⁷ Winthrop to EE, 26 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

⁹⁸ Richard K. Crallé, ed., *The Works of John C. Calhoun*, 6 vols. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854-57), 4:238-58, quoted in George J. Gill, “Edward Everett, Minister to the Court of St. James, 1841-1845.” (Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 1959), 114.

⁹⁹ EE to JCC (No. 171), 2 August 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 49.

and the United States rejected it, he would lose leverage in the bargaining.¹⁰⁰ Everett had no explanation for Pakenham in relation to American actions, believing that “the negotiation was transferred to Washington by the appointment of Mr. Pakenham, expressly with a view to give a new impulse to it.”¹⁰¹ Wilbur D. Jones, a historian and grandson of Lord Aberdeen, purports that Calhoun declined to offer the compromise suggested by Everett because he did not believe the Senate would accept it.¹⁰² Although reports from friends in the United States warned that the recently elected Polk might replace him as Minister to Britain, Everett remained fully involved in Oregon discussions with Lord Aberdeen.¹⁰³

In late February 1845, Everett had a lengthy conversation with Aberdeen about the status of the Oregon dispute. Both men worried that Congress would soon pass a law allowing the United States government to create a territorial government in Oregon. In this exchange, Everett first attempted to ascertain the most conciliatory boundary line that the British government would agree to with the United States, fully believing that his government would need to know such information.¹⁰⁴ Aberdeen, Everett quickly discovered, wanted arbitration, as he believed it would circumvent any questions of national honor.¹⁰⁵ Pakenham, following his instructions, had already offered arbitration to the U.S. government, which rejected it flatly on January 21, 1845.¹⁰⁶ Aberdeen believed that an arbitrator could answer two questions: “First, whether the United States had an exclusive right to the whole [of the Oregon Territory], or whether as England says

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 30.

¹⁰¹ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁰² Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 30.

¹⁰³ Winthrop to EE, 26 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

¹⁰⁴ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁰⁵ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 121.

¹⁰⁶ Gill, “Edward Everett, Minister,” 116.

it is open to both parties; and if this were decided in favor of England, Secondly, what would be a fair line of boundary, by way of compromise.”¹⁰⁷

Everett agreed with Aberdeen and attempted to present this idea to Secretary of State Calhoun. He believed that if an arbitrator decided that the United States had valid claim to the whole of Oregon, then Americans would rejoice the outcome. Even if an arbitrator did not award the United States all of the Oregon Territory, then he still believed that the United States had a good possibility of receiving an acceptable boundary from the arbitration process. The arbitration process, Everett and Aberdeen agreed, “affords the readiest method of an honorable adjustment of the question.”¹⁰⁸

Everett further argued his point to Calhoun:

Entertaining myself a clear conviction that our title is a strong one to the valley of the Columbia, that it is a respectable one up to the Russian limit; and that the offer of the 49th degree by way of compromise, is eminently reasonable and founded on the best and most obvious principles for settling such a question, I should feel entire confidence that the decision of an arbitration would be to that extent favorable to us; and it would of course afford a mode of finally disposing of the subject as convenient to us, as for as the point d’honneur is concerned, as to Great Britain.¹⁰⁹

The only problem with arbitration that Everett identified was the probable difficulty of finding a neutral arbitrator, as England had much sway in Europe.

After Calhoun’s rejection of Pakenham’s arbitration proposal in January, Everett switched gears, focusing on what boundary line the two nations might agree to in one-on-one negotiations.¹¹⁰ First, Everett reiterated his often recited stance that the United States would not peacefully surrender land above the forty-ninth parallel. Aberdeen countered, as he had many times before to Everett, that as a representative of the British, it would

¹⁰⁷ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 57.

injure seriously his political career to accept a line that his nation had “repeatedly refused,” unless that boundary offer came in the form of an award from a third-party arbitration.¹¹¹

Seemingly stalemated, Everett then proposed a different solution to Lord Aberdeen. With much confidence, Everett believed that the British would accept a boundary line along the forty-ninth parallel if the United States modified it to give Great Britain the southern part of Quadra and Vancouver’s Island. While Aberdeen did not agree to this outright, Everett expressed his confidence that his compromise “is the best boundary which we can get by negotiation” as the southern tip of Quadra and Vancouver’s Island had a much larger importance to the British than the Americans.¹¹² These two areas would “be a great boon to them [the British],” Everett continued, “as giving them a passage through the Straits of Fuca.”¹¹³ Little did Everett know that this offer, which he based off of much research and study of the Oregon Territory and previous negotiations, would later make such an important impact on the two nations and prompt historian Wilbur D. Jones to refer to the terms of the Oregon Treaty as the “Everett compromise.”¹¹⁴

Unaware that he had laid the groundwork for the future treaty, Everett continued his discussions with Aberdeen. At this point, expansionist U.S. Congressmen called for the establishment of a territorial government in the Oregon Territory.¹¹⁵ Aberdeen believed that the United States could not set up jurisdiction in Oregon without interfering with British subjects. If the United States did this, Aberdeen asserted that Britain would

¹¹¹ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 81.

¹¹⁵ Gill, “Edward Everett, Minister,” 117.

move troops into the area. Aberdeen did not want war, Everett maintained to the State Department, but he wanted the United States to understand the British reaction.

Aberdeen also informed Everett that “if the United States proceeded while an amicable negotiation is in progress to put an end to the convention of joint occupation and to appropriate to themselves the territory in dispute, war was inevitable.”¹¹⁶

At this critical state of affairs, Everett also worried that the London press, which often wrote despairingly about American actions in Oregon, would turn European opinion against the United States. Recent articles in the *Times*, such as one printed on March 1, had, in Everett’s opinion, given a very superficial explanation of the Oregon case to the British public, intended to “rally public opinion in favor of the British side of the question.”¹¹⁷ While this particular piece mentioned the willingness of the British to compromise, preferably by arbitration, it also talked about the possibility of sending a British squadron to the area, an idea that Everett believed foreshadowed the course of action by Prime Minister Peel. To try to prevent other European nations from believing pro-British arguments, Everett met with French ambassador, the Comte de St. Aulaire, and the Prussian Minister in Great Britain, Chevalier Bunsen, explaining to them the U.S. point of view.¹¹⁸

Throughout his conversations with Lord Aberdeen and in his discourse with the United States government, Everett remained perennially clearheaded and non-confrontational, attempting at all times to reason ways in which the two nations could negotiate peace. He also looked ahead, recognizing that if the United States entered a war with Great Britain, then France could join with the British, and if the United States

¹¹⁶ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ EE to Calhoun (No. 273), 7 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

lost that war, then the British would take the whole Oregon Territory and negotiate for peace from a very strong position.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

CHAPTER 6

DAMAGE CONTROL

The Democratic platform at the party's 1844 convention in Baltimore foreshadowed an end to the stalled Oregon negotiations in Washington. At the convention, frontrunner Martin Van Buren could not secure the party's nomination. Too many Democrats despised the former President's opposition to immediate annexation of Texas.¹ With Andrew Jackson's support, James K. Polk, a young politician from Tennessee, won the Democratic nomination as its dark horse candidate. Democrats at the convention combined the issues of Texas and Oregon to create an expansionist campaign platform.² Throughout his campaign, Polk focused on this westward expansion and "stressed the anti-British implications of both Oregon and Texas, thus playing upon the Anglophobia of their constituents, especially Irish and Canadian immigrants."³ The promise of reoccupying all of Oregon, up to fifty-four degrees forty minutes, and re-annexing Texas excited many Democrats who wanted to expand the nation. Polk's platform promised inexpensive, available land in Texas and Oregon.⁴

Once President James K. Polk entered the White House, his administration quickly completed the annexation of Texas. A diligent worker with clear foreign policy goals, Polk had much interest in the details of U.S. diplomatic relations.⁵ He chose James Buchanan as his Secretary of State but struggled at times to trust his abilities. Polk

¹ Holt, *Rise and Fall*, 173.

² Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 124.

³ Holt, *Rise and Fall*, 184-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 206

⁵ Schlesinger, Jr., *Age of Jackson*, 442.

confided in his diary, towards the end of his presidency, his preference to oversee all governmental actions:

Many matters of minor importance and of detail remain on my table to be attended to. The public have no idea of the constant accumulation of business requiring the President's attention. No President who performs his duty faithfully and conscientiously can have any leisure. If he entrusts the details and smaller matters to subordinates constant errors will occur. I prefer to supervise the whole operations of the government rather than entrust the public business to subordinates, and this makes my duties very great.⁶

After the annexation of Texas, Polk's administration focused on Oregon, which proved increasingly serious. While Polk dictated U.S. policy, negotiating the boundary fell to Secretary of State Buchanan.

Henry Wheaton, one of Everett's friends in the United States, told him that most Americans believed Great Britain would resort to war if the United States attempted to take possession of the entire Oregon Territory.⁷ American efforts to erect a territorial government in the area, Wheaton continued, would probably lead to the British sending a large force into the Pacific Northwest, to protect their interest there. Wheaton referred to the problem as a Gordian knot, or inflexible situation. In this context, the opportunity for a peaceful compromise as Polk assumed the Presidency, seemed to decrease.

Others had less concern about the Oregon Territory. Lord Ashburton, for instance, felt that the two nations would have no problem working together to solve the problem by compromise unless the United States started to appear menacing, which would make a compromise very difficult.⁸ As Ashburton and Aberdeen spoke frequently

⁶ James K. Polk, *Polk: The Diary of a President, 1845-1849, Covering the Mexican War, the Acquisition of Oregon, and the Conquest of California and the Southwest*, Edited by Allan Nevins (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1929), 316.

⁷ EE to H. Wheaton, 1 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

⁸ EE to Calhoun (No. 273), 7 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

about the subject, Everett attached much importance to Ashburton's reference to a compromise. Many in the United States also had confidence that negotiation would solve the problem with no real threat of war to worry about. Both nations waited for the new administration to react to the dispute.⁹

In his inaugural address, James K. Polk offered an abrasive assertion of his views towards the Oregon negotiations. On March 4, 1845, Polk addressed the world, especially concerning Great Britain, with very "loud language" concerning U.S. rights in the Oregon Territory.¹⁰ "Our title to the country of the Oregon," Polk asserted bluntly, "is 'clear and unquestionable,' and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it with their wives and children."¹¹ Polk, reiterating his campaign claim for the whole of Oregon, declared that America's claim to the Oregon Territory stretched to the north parallel of fifty-four degrees forty minutes, or the entirety of the Pacific Northwest coast.

The U.S. population had started to spread into the Columbia River valley. Polk asserted his intent to protect these American emigrants with U.S. laws and from outside nations. "The increasing facilities of intercourse will easily bring the States, of which the formation in that part of our territory can not be long delayed, within the sphere of our federative Union."¹² The Monroe Doctrine, he said, invalidated any rights or proper claims that the British had in the Oregon Territory. He summed up his address with a warning to the other nations:

All alliances having a tendency to jeopard [sic] the welfare and honor of our country or sacrifice any one of the national interests will be studiously

⁹ EE to L. Brooks, 27 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁰ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 55.

¹¹ Richardson, *Messages and Papers: Polk*.

¹² *Ibid.*

avoided, and yet no opportunity will be lost to cultivate a favorable understanding with foreign governments by which our navigation and commerce may be extended and the ample products of our fertile soil, as well as the manufactures of our skilled artisans, find a ready market and remunerating prices in foreign countries.¹³

Some of the Americans who gathered to listen to speech undoubtedly wondered how the British would react to such menacing words. Even his Secretary of State, Buchanan, who had, as a U.S. Senator, supported extending U.S. laws to the Oregon Territory, attempted to calm Polk's fiery opinions towards Great Britain, especially concerning the Oregon question.¹⁴

Polk's inaugural address reached Great Britain on March 27 by a New York steamer. His remarks on the Oregon question, Everett informed Secretary of State Calhoun, inflamed the British. The day after receiving Polk's statement, the *Times* ran a headline reacting to Polk's words on Oregon. The article stated:

He pledges himself at the very outset of his career, and with the full knowledge that negotiations are actually going on between his Cabinet and Great Britain, that the American title to the country of the Oregon is clear and unquestionable. But it may spare time likely, to be consumed in a very unprofitable discussion, if we express an opinion at least as decided as his own, that in spite of his marauders, and what he terms his constitutional rights, the territory of Oregon will never be wrestled from the British crown to which it belongs, but by War.¹⁵

Thus, this British paper professed, much like Polk had for the United States in his Annual Message, that the British Empire was entitled to all of Oregon. Although the *Times* served occasionally as the mouthpiece for semiofficial communications, Everett did not consider this article representative in any way of the Peel Government's party line.

Articles in this vein, he felt, could rouse public opinion in Great Britain that opposed the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Moore, *Works of James Buchanan*, 5: 452; Polk, *Polk: Diary of a President*, xxi; Rakestraw, *For Honor or Destiny*, 92.

¹⁵ EE to Calhoun (No. 288) (Confidential), 2 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

American cause. Everett also started to worry about the way that the *Times*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and other parts of London's liberal press had started to treat the Oregon question as a domestic political party issue in order to "annoy the [Peel] ministry."¹⁶

Polk's speech "touched off a conflagration of patriotic fire all over London," creating a union of Conservatives and Whigs in the British Parliament against the American claims to all of Oregon.¹⁷ Lord John Russell, leader of the opposition party, announced that he would bring the Oregon section of the President's message to the attention of the government in Parliament.¹⁸ During a speech in the House of Commons on April 4, Prime Minister Peel also refuted Polk's claim, saying that the British also had "clear and unquestionable rights in Oregon."¹⁹ He expanded this statement into a threat to the United States, claiming that "having exhausted every effort to effect that settlement, if our rights shall be invaded, we are resolved – and we are prepared – to maintain them."²⁰ Aberdeen echoed Peel's message, adding that he would continue to negotiate for an amicable solution.²¹

Lord Aberdeen confronted Everett about Polk's message, asking him what the new President meant. Describing the Foreign Secretary as startled by Polk's incredible demands, Everett attempted to calm Aberdeen. He reassured him that the United States would, despite Polk's initial speech, eventually negotiate and compromise on the forty-ninth parallel.²² This assurance, Everett believed, helped calm Lord Aberdeen and, thus, the British population.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Gill, "Edward Everett, Minister," 118; Crosby, *Sir Robert Peel's Administration*, 117.

¹⁸ EE to Calhoun (No. 288) (Confidential), 2 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁹ Crosby, *Sir Robert Peel's Administration*, 117.

²⁰ Willson, *America's Ambassadors to England*, 240.

²¹ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 61.

²² EE to J.M. Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

The British response to U.S. actions concerning Oregon proved mostly reserved in nature.²³ Lord Aberdeen's message about the Oregon question to the House of Lords during this period shows some of this restraint. He began by, firmly stating that Great Britain held unquestionable rights in Oregon, but he wanted, above all else, to preserve the peace between the two nations. He continued:

At the same time, there are limits which must not be passed; and I say that, without attaching too much weight to questions of national honour – for I think, fortunately for this country, that we need not be very sensitive on these matters – it is not for us, God knows, to 'seek the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth,' or anywhere else; our power, our character and position, are such as to enable us to look with indifference on that of which other countries might be, perhaps, more jealous.²⁴

Aberdeen hoped that the two nations would find a conclusion that could please both nations.

Despite Aberdeen's pacific expressions, the British took offense to Polk's inaugural address. The Peel Ministry believed that U.S. attempts to claim this territory while in the midst of negotiations between Buchanan and Pakenham in Washington, hindered the chances of a peaceful division of the land. In a private letter to Aberdeen on February 23, 1845, Peel revealed his concern about the ability of Great Britain to maintain friendly relations with the United States due to the Oregon boundary question. He referred to the situation as "the most important as immediately affecting the maintenance of amicable Relations with the United States....after the refusal of arbitration we cannot plead *surprize* – whatever may hereafter take place. These

²³ Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*, 101.

²⁴ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 263.

occurrences render compromise and concession (difficult enough before considering what stands on record of past negotiations) ten times more difficult now.”²⁵

Peel also told Lord Aberdeen that Britain should take precautionary measures, as Americans continually moved into the area, strengthening their numbers there, and lessening British sway in the area.²⁶ In particular, he recommended sending another war vessel to the mouth of the Columbia River.²⁷ “It appears to me,” Peel insisted, “that an additional frigate at the Mouth of the Columbia [River], and a small artillery force on shore, would aid most materially the resident British Settlers.... Might not a stout frigate be immediately sent from hence, with sealed orders, carrying some marines & artillerymen – professedly for the Cape of Good Hope, or New South Wales, or where you will – but really for the mouth of the Oregon, the destination not being known to anyone but ourselves at the time of sailing?”²⁸ Peel wanted to secure an honorable compromise, but he realized that with Polk’s agitation of the question, negotiations could prove difficult.²⁹

In early April 1845, Robert Gould, a member of the American press, informed Everett that the British government, since Polk’s message, had dispatched a 50-gun frigate to the mouth of the Columbia River and placed a small artillery force on shore.³⁰ Already having heard hints about this endeavor, Everett kept a calm attitude towards the situation, telling his secretary that if both nations acted with moderation, then they could

²⁵ Peel to Aberdeen, 23 February 1845, quoted in Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 262.

²⁶ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 262.

²⁷ Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*, 73-4.

²⁸ Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 262.

²⁹ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 57.

³⁰ Robert Gould to EE, 5 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2; Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*, 101; Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 335.

still reach an amicable compromise.³¹ He did not expect the compromise to come easily, though. Everett believed that the United States would struggle to remove the British Navy “once established in the valley of the Columbia.”³² Writing to Winthrop, Everett admitted that Oregon “is the most threatening question that we have had for a long time; of the same nature as the North Eastern Boundary but harder to settle because the public here of all parties have taken up the absurd impression that they were overreached in that matter; and it will be therefore more difficult to come to a reasonable adjustment of this.”³³

Everett knew that Lord Aberdeen wanted to avoid war over the Oregon question. Much of the animosity towards the United States in Britain, Everett believed, came from the opposition Whig party, which often attempted to goad Peel’s Ministry to fight the United States, if necessary, to protect England’s honor. In spite of Polk’s address, for example, Lord Aberdeen informed Robert Peel that he still did not believe that Polk would “drive matters to extremity.”³⁴ Aberdeen’s proposition of arbitration for the dispute on March 3, 1845, helped ease Everett’s fears of a possible war. Everett felt that through arbitration, the United States would lose no important areas below the fourth-ninth degree. He hoped that the United States would accept the Aberdeen’s offer of arbitration, which, Everett believed “a safe and honorable mode of adjustment.”³⁵ The Foreign Secretary had noted that Great Britain would allow any power to umpire the arbitration process, which, Aberdeen hoped, would lead to a simple resolution.³⁶ In addition to

³¹ EE to W.C. Rives, 14 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

³² EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

³³ EE to Winthrop, 29 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

³⁴ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 58.

³⁵ EE to W. Sturgis (Private), 3 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

³⁶ EE to Calhoun (No. 273), 7 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

Aberdeen's willingness to send the boundary dispute to arbitration, Everett also felt that the strong commercial and manufacturing interests and interactions between the two countries would resist vigorously the politicians of both sides who attempted to push for a war.³⁷ As long as the United States remained "reasonable & moderate," Everett felt that the two nations could maintain peace while solving this issue.³⁸

In early April, talks between Buchanan and Pakenham on Oregon reopened in Washington, and prospects for a peaceful solution increased. Robert Winthrop hoped that the British government's desire to compromise would increase further when they learned that "Two or three thousand [Americans] will, under Captains & Lieutenants, with a good gun, four pounds of powder, and eight pounds of lead, for every male over 14 years of age," were preparing to march to the Oregon Territory.³⁹ He thought that the British may want to make an arrangement with the United States or risk losing all of Oregon to American settlers. The British discovery of the excursion to the Oregon Territory, though, quickly stalled the negotiations.⁴⁰

By the end of April 1845, Robert Winthrop began to hope that Polk would dispatch a special mission to Great Britain with power to negotiate the Oregon question in London. Winthrop believed that while Richard Pakenham possessed much diplomatic skill, he felt Buchanan had "party views which he thinks will be subserved by an uncompromising course towards Great Britain, & who would be afraid to ...agree to...almost any conventional line."⁴¹ He feared that each year that passed without a

³⁷ EE to Brooks, 15 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2; EE to Buchanan (No. 317), 15 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

³⁸ EE to Brooks, 15 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

³⁹ Winthrop to EE, 30 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

⁴⁰ Gill, "Edward Everett, Minister," 122-3.

⁴¹ Winthrop to EE, 30 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

compromise treaty involving the Oregon Territory would hinder the ability for the two nations to find a peaceful resolution. Winthrop blamed the Western U.S. Senators' calls for all of Oregon, claiming that they endangered a compromise with the British. President Polk's expansionist platform had motivated these Westerners to support him in the election, and he risked offending them by offering to the British any compromise of land in Oregon. Winthrop also anticipated another potential roadblock; if the British insisted upon free navigation of the Columbia River, he predicted a swift rejection from the Polk administration.⁴²

During this period, Everett also anticipated that Polk would soon select a loyal partisan to replace him as Minister to Great Britain, he believed that the new Minister's mission would not have "anything to do with Oregon."⁴³ Everett felt that "no convention negotiated at London would have the slightest chance of being approved by the Senate. The work must be done at Washington, by feeling the way, day by day, with leading Senators, as in the case of Lord Ashburton's treaty."

Only four months after Polk won the Presidency on a campaign platform that proposed that the United States control of all of the Oregon Territory, he decided to negotiate with the British. On July 12, 1845, after Polk informed his Secretary of State, James Buchanan, of his decision, Buchanan sent a note to Richard Pakenham, offering him the traditional compromise line.⁴⁴ In the note, Buchanan told Pakenham that Polk, "has determined...upon the principle of compromise...to make one more effort to adjust this long-pending controversy."⁴⁵ The offer included running the boundary line from

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ EE to Winthrop, 18 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 61; Moore, *Works of James Buchanan*, 6: 194-204.

⁴⁵ Moore, *Works of James Buchanan*, 6: 203.

between the two nations' possessions in the Oregon Territory along the forty-ninth parallel from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The offer lacked the free navigation of the Columbia River, which Great Britain wanted, but it did offer "to make free to Great Britain any port or ports on Vancouver's Island south of this parallel which the British Government may desire."⁴⁶

Polk rationalized his offer by claiming that he felt he must show deference to his predecessors by offering the forty-ninth degree, a proposal tendered by U.S. Presidents dating back to James Monroe.⁴⁷ Secretary of State Buchanan expanded upon the Polk administration's decision to make the offer:

Had this been a new question...the President never would have presented such a proposition; but it must not be forgotten that the American Government never dies, although the agents who administer it are perpetually changing. Its course of policy towards foreign nations should not change with every changing administration, but ought to be uniform and consistent, unless for reasons of imperative necessity.⁴⁸

In addition to this, Polk noted in his diary his anxiousness to preserve the peace between the nations.⁴⁹

Pakenham received the note four days later. Surprising many politicians on both sides of the Atlantic, he refused the American offer immediately and without any consultation with his superior, Lord Aberdeen. This infuriated Aberdeen, who lectured Pakenham that he should have accepted the offer.⁵⁰ Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell both denounced his decision, too.⁵¹ After such a swift rejection from Pakenham, Polk again insisted on a boundary at 54° 40', refusing to embroil the United States in any

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6: 203-4.

⁴⁷ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 47; Polk, *Polk: Diary of a President*, 2.

⁴⁸ Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*. 8 vols. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931-48) 5: 33.

⁴⁹ Polk, *Polk: Diary of a President*, 2.

⁵⁰ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 247-8.

⁵¹ Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 12: 248.

more arbitration on the issue.⁵² Historian Frederick Merk asserts that the President's unwillingness to consider arbitration "was part of Polk's program of pressure. It was intended to convey to the British his determination to settle the issue without further delay, even by force, if necessary."⁵³ On August 30, James Buchanan officially revoked the U.S. proposal, and Polk informed Pakenham that he awaited another offer from Great Britain.⁵⁴ Pakenham, embarrassed by Polk's quick repeal of the offer, believed that he had not erred. Defending his actions, Pakenham claimed that his instructions from the British government, had led him to believe that the British government would only accept an offer that conceded more land to Great Britain and that the American offer did not meet the standards that Lord Aberdeen had proposed, either publicly or privately, to him.⁵⁵

Before the British government received word that Polk had rescinded the offer, Louis McLane, a Democrat from Delaware who Polk had chosen as Everett's replacement, arrived in Great Britain, forcing Everett to vacate his post during this very tense time in the negotiation process. Everett did not learn of the U.S. actions until he arrived back in the United States. With Polk's closure of the Oregon negotiations and the negotiations stalemated in Washington, McLane had little to do.⁵⁶ Secretary of State Buchanan attempted to encourage McLane that "although the President does not intend to transfer the Oregon negotiation from Washington to London, yet, as quent [sic] opportunities of conversing upon the subject [of Oregon], it is proper that you should be well informed of the present state of the question," a suggestion that Everett would

⁵² Merk, *Oregon Question*, 340.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 220.

⁵⁴ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 152.

⁵⁵ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 337.

⁵⁶ Munroe, *Louis McLane*, 519.

certainly agree with.⁵⁷ While reacquainting himself with the post, McLane found much prejudice against the Polk administration, which he conjectured had resulted from the efforts of Everett to subvert the incoming Minister and his political party.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Moore, *Works of James Buchanan*, 6: 186.

⁵⁸ Munroe, *Louis McLane*, 519.

CHAPTER 7

DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS

During his time in England, Everett displayed constant concern to discharge his public duties faithfully and in the best interest of the United States. He also promoted positive feelings between the people of the two nations. Everett's ability to connect on a personal level with the British aided his diplomatic efforts. He found time outside of his numerous official duties to make social connections. His background and positive feelings toward the British enabled him to integrate with British high society with which his ministerial post connected him. Everett also had good manners, made good conversation, and read voraciously.¹ These qualities, combined with his joy for arts and literature, helped him make many friends while in London. His ability to build strong relationships later enabled him to work comfortably with his British counterparts while in Great Britain and facilitated in continued contact with these men after his recall.

Within his first month in Great Britain, Everett met many of the nation's most important men and women. One of these first new acquaintances, Sir Robert Peel, had recently become Prime Minister. Everett took to Peel very quickly, describing him as a man with few enemies who showed friendliness to all.² Throughout the course of his mission, Everett met with Peel five or six times a year for dinner, in addition to many shared social events.³ Everett later happily recalled that all of their personal interactions

¹ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 96.

² EE to Mr. & Mrs. Caledonia, 3 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

³ EE to Brooks (Private), 2 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

had “been of the most friendly description.”⁴ Peel’s punctuality and attentiveness concerning matters of business also gained him respect in Everett’s opinion.

While the two men did not have an intimate friendship, Peel showed support for Everett. In June 1843, Everett was embarrassed when he went to Oxford University to accept an honorary doctorate degree. During the ceremony, a group of dissenters, churchmen upset that “the Church of England was torn by the Tractarian controversy,” challenged the award by walking out of the ceremony, objecting that Everett had previously worked as a Unitarian minister.⁵ The occurrence surprised Everett, who considered the incident “somewhat annoying,” despite the University’s assurances that only a small number of people opposed Everett’s award.⁶ A few days later, Everett met with Peel at the Queen’s drawing room, who expressed his resentment about the treatment that he had received at Oxford.⁷

Even more than Peel, Everett found a like mind in Lord Aberdeen. After his first meeting with Aberdeen, Everett felt very pleased with the kind manner that the Foreign Secretary displayed.⁸ Everett described Aberdeen as “a person of most extensive information, straightforward character and goodness of heart,” and he enjoyed both his official and personal dealings with him.⁹ The two frequently dined together.¹⁰ Lord Aberdeen felt similarly about Everett. He realized that Everett understood the English and called him “a marvelous favourite with us.”¹¹ Instantly, Everett could sense that he had a good temper and desired peace for their two nations. Aberdeen, like many in Peel’s

⁴ EE to Mr. & Mrs. Caledonia, 3 March 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

⁵ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 51; Varg, *Edward Everett*, 98.

⁶ EE to Wheaton, 28 July 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

⁷ EE to Brooks, 18 July 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, folder 2.

⁸ EE to DW (No. 2), 23 November 1841, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 44.

⁹ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 232-233.

¹⁰ Aberdeen to EE, 8 June 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 3.

¹¹ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 235.

Ministry, did not worry much about the current disputes with the United States, as long as he conserved peace.¹² Thus, he did not study the issues standing between the United States and Great Britain with great care. As Everett discussed issues with him, he “became aware that Aberdeen wanted a settlement and was usually indifferent to the details.”¹³

Everett also developed a warm relationship with Lord Ashburton. Although Everett did not know Ashburton before he negotiated the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, they forged a quick friendship during and after the negotiations. By invitation, Everett and his family spent Christmas 1842 with Lord Ashburton at his house. While there, the two men discussed much public business between their nations. They talked at length about the Oregon dispute, and Everett felt that Ashburton seemed intrigued by his proposal about the boundary. In the course of Everett’s stay, Ashburton informed him that he could have settled the boundary, if he “had been authorized to concede us a strip North of Columbia river, terminating in a port, within the Straits of Juan de Fuca.”¹⁴ Everett felt that “there is a disposition to entertain favorably all proposals for a more liberal intercourse with us.”¹⁵ In several conversations such as this, Everett informally promoted the forty-ninth parallel as an acceptable boundary, which helped increase awareness in Britain to his proposal.

Like many of his relationships, his rapport with Ashburton lasted throughout Everett’s time in England. When the Tyler administration offered Everett the China mission, Ashburton lamented that sending Everett would be using a “much too fine an

¹² Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 306.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ EE to DW, 2 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

instrument for such a purpose; it would be like cutting blocks with a razor,” and when Everett and his family left England in 1845, he did not forget to send the Ashburtons heartfelt letters of farewell.¹⁶

Everett spent much of his spare time meeting with people of England’s upper class. In addition to the productive relationships he made with Peel, Aberdeen, and Ashburton, Everett met with many other important Britons. On several occasions, the Minister met with the Queen at social events.¹⁷ One of his closest friends during his time in London, Lord Mahon [Philip Henry Stanhope], served in Parliament when he met Everett. The two lived three doors apart in Grosvenor Place. The two often ate breakfast together and grew close.¹⁸ Everett also developed friendships with the Duke of Wellington [Arthur Wellesley] and Benjamin Disraeli.¹⁹

A quick relationship developed between Everett and Sydney Smith, the writer and clergyman. During his first Christmas as Minister in Great Britain, Smith invited Everett and his family to spend the holiday with his family in Combe Florey, a small English village. Everett accepted, and a friendship soon formed. Later, Smith described Everett to the *Morning Chronicle* in London:

He made upon us the same impression he appears to make universally in this country; we thought him (a character which the English always receive with affectionate regard) an amiable American republican without rudeness, and accomplished without ostentation. ‘If I had known *that* gentleman five years ago’ (said one of my guests), ‘I should have been deep in the American funds;’ ...I am sure we owe to the Americans a debt of gratitude for sending to us such an excellent specimen of their productions. In diplomacy, a far more important object than falsehood is,

¹⁶ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 236; EE to Lady Ashburton, 10 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

¹⁷ Invitation to EE, 19 May 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Box 9, Folder 1.

¹⁸ Mahon to EE, 22 January 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 3.

¹⁹ Wellington to EE, 22 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

to keep two nations in friendship. In this point, no nation has ever been better served than America has been served by Mr. Everett.”²⁰

Everett and Smith remained close throughout his service in London, and they occasionally took trips together during his stay there. “I have dined & breakfasted more frequently at his house,” Everett said of Smith, “than almost any other in town.”²¹

Clearly, early in his career as Minister, Everett found much success in making friends with members of the nation’s highest social classes. He came to know Lord Ashley [later Lord Shaftesbury], Thomas Macaulay, a famous English literary figure with whom he commonly dined, and several other extraordinary men of letters.²² Later in life, Everett described Macaulay, one of his closest friends while in Great Britain, as “the most distinguished writer of the age.”²³ Another very renowned man, poet Samuel Rogers, also enjoyed Everett’s company. Still actively engaged in British society, Rogers, at times, shared his manuscripts with Everett and introduced him to Thomas Moore, another renowned poet.²⁴

Everett also maintained positive relations with such prominent members of British society as the Duke of Rutland [John Manners], with whom he spent a week’s vacation, Thomas Grenville, a former Prime Minister, the Duchess of Northumberland, and Lord Harrowby.²⁵ The following letter to his father-in-law captures the progression that often occurred when Everett made new acquaintances, where one meeting led to many more:

There [at the Wormeleys] we met Commodore Napier, (whose exploits on the Syrian coast in 1840 are so well known to you)...Wednesday I

²⁰ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 233.

²¹ EE to Brooks, 17 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

²² Varg, *Edward Everett*, 95.

²³ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

²⁴ EE to Rogers, 22 December 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

²⁵ EE to DW, Everett Microfilm, 1 October 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 3; EE to Brooks, 2 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1; EE to Brooks, 14 August 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 3; Duchess of Northumberland to EE, 14 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

breakfasted with Mr. [Thomas Babington] Macaulay, whose conversation is a perpetual feast; - and we dined the same day at the Archbishop of Canterbury's at Lambeth [present day Waterloo], with a large party.... Yesterday we all dined with Miss [Angela] Burdett Coutts, to meet the Duke of Cambridge.... We dine today at Mr. G. Harcourt's the oldest son of the Archbishop of York; tomorrow I breakfast with the new dean of Westminster (Mr. S. Wilberforce) in the cloister, and in the afternoon, we all go down to Nimeham near Oxford, the beautiful let of the Archbishop of York, where we are to pass Sunday & Monday. Mr. [Thomas] Grenville & Mr. [Samuel] Rogers are there (Mr. R 82 years old yesterday) so that there will be four, as the papers say, "whose united ages amount to" more than I care to calculate.²⁶

Everett took several trips, often for official business, during his stay in London.²⁷

Through these travels, Everett met many Lords, Ladies, Dukes, and several others of England's high society. Quite often, the lavish train cars, houses, furnishings, and overall lifestyles and money of these elites surprised Everett, yet he got along well with the upper class.²⁸ During his four-year service as Minister, Everett never lacked for an invitation to someone's house, society meeting, or various other social gatherings. He visited with Lord Fitzwilliam at his home in Milton in January 1843, upon the Lord's request.²⁹

While on this trip, Everett met Lord Lyttleton, a relative of the Queen, and Baron and Lady Park.³⁰ Everett spent much time socializing with many famous Britons, such as the Duke and Duchess of Bedford, who took him to Woburn Abbey and to meet the Duke of Sussex.³¹

Returning to Lord Fitzwilliams's, Everett attended a dinner gathering with his host and a number of other prominent British citizens, like John Denison [later Viscount

²⁶ EE to Brooks, 1 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

²⁷ EE to Brooks, 19 September 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 2.

²⁸ EE to Brooks, 3 May 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 1.

²⁹ EE to DW, 28 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8 (B), Folder 4; Fitzwilliam to EE, 8 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

³⁰ EE to Charlotte (Everett's wife), 6 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

³¹ EE to Charlotte (Everett's wife), 10 January 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4; EE to Charlotte (Everett's wife), 15 January, 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

Ossington] and Lady Charlotte. Trying desperately to share the lifestyle of this crowd, Everett decided to join the men on a foxhunt. He mounted a horse and rode out into the woods, where he, as he describes the situation to his daughter, fell off of his horse into mud, and then “rode indignantly from the field.”³² When Everett reported this mishap to his family, his wife and daughter could not believe the story. “How,” his wife Charlotte asked, “could you be persuaded to mount a spirited horse and go out with the hunters? – so little as you are experienced in feats of horsemanship, ...and I only wonder you did not break y’s [sic] neck instead of only falling.”³³

Everett also took time out of his official schedule to travel with other members of British high society.³⁴ At times, Everett realized that recounting these adventures, such as staying in castles and taking trips to Scotland, might sound like, as he described it, “egotistical gossip,” and he did not want his family gossiping about his adventures to others.³⁵ He did this, more than likely, to prevent more criticism of him in the American and British presses.

Through these travels, Everett came to love the climate and style of England. “I consider the climate of England decidedly a healthy one....A large number of the most eminent men attain a good old age,” he told P.C. Brooks.³⁶ He also admired many of the professional men whom he met. He envied their ability to live prudent lives, acquire enough money to live on, and, then, live carefree lives while many eminent American men worked constantly to maintain their wealth.³⁷

³² EE to Charlotte (Everett’s daughter), 20 January, 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

³³ Charlotte (Everett’s wife) to EE, 21 January, 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 8, Folder 4.

³⁴ EE to Charlotte (Everett’s wife), 7 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

³⁵ EE to Brooks, 2 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

³⁶ EE to Brooks, 3 July 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 3.

³⁷ Ibid.

In addition to his extensive trips, Everett built many friendships through his involvement in British organizations. For instance, he attended the Royal Agricultural Society's meetings regularly, where its members always greeted him with much hospitality.³⁸ He also participated in the City of London's General Pension Society along with many of Britain's most prominent citizens. This benevolent group, too, enjoyed Everett's company and noted with much praise his "desire to perpetuate and increase the friendly relations which now happily exist between this Country & the United States."³⁹

Many times, Britons would show their friendship to Everett. In addition to their hospitality while Everett traveled, some would do favors for him, such as reserving him visitor seats in Parliament.⁴⁰ Others, such as the Duke of Rutland, showed consideration for Everett in different ways. "There is in every nobleman & gentleman's family," Everett told his father in law, "someone who hunts or shoots or both; - not seldom every member of it. One sometimes receives in town a friendly token of the sports of the Country, in a present of game. The Duke of Rutland, the other day, sent us a hare and some fine pheasants from his hunting lodge in Derbyshire: - and the Duke of Sutherland some grouse and a black cock from Scotland."⁴¹

All these acts of kindness and hospitality demonstrate that Everett enjoyed widespread popularity in British high society. He acquired a large circle of friends while in Great Britain, many of whom had influence on the British government. Everett, a very intelligence man, realized that personal friendships would help him succeed in the public sphere, including his support of resolving the Oregon boundary with a compromise on the

³⁸ EE to Wheaton, 28 July 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 22, Volume 46.

³⁹ Bloomfield to EE, 29 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

⁴⁰ EE to Clifford, 23 July 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 49.

⁴¹ EE to Brooks, 2 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

forty-ninth parallel. Everett explained to what extent these social relationships mattered in a letter to Webster: “I have had the good fortune to place myself generally on a footing with them, which I think would secure me the earliest information of anything important for me to know and in their power to communicate; and I should think I failed in my duty to the public, if by any indiscretion on my part, I cut myself from this confidence.”⁴²

⁴² EE to DW (Confidential), 2 May 1842, Everett Microfilm, Reel 7, Folder 4.

CHAPTER 8

RECALL AND REPLACEMENT

Many Britons regretted that Everett, a “promoter of pacific relations between G[reat]. Britain & America, & at the same time so prized a guest in every circle...should be about to retire from his diplomatic station at this critical period.”¹ They recognized their nation’s loss when Everett received his recall. Everett did not want to lose his position and confided to Webster that he would be very happy to remain Minister in Great Britain. He had cultivated strong, lasting friendships with many important people in the nation.

More than a year before Edward Everett returned to the United States, he anticipated his recall with much regret. Six months before the 1844 U.S. Presidential election, Everett heard rumors about his removal.² Knowing that Tyler did not trust him as much as some other politicians, he felt that the President might replace him.³ Robert Winthrop and the British presses kept Everett up to date on the political atmosphere in the United States, thus, he knew about the Baltimore Conventions and the potential presidential candidates.⁴ More than any other factor, Everett knew that the loss of 1844 Whig Presidential candidate Henry Clay to the Democratic candidate, James K. Polk, would greatly diminish his chances of remaining in Great Britain as the American liaison to the British. Everett hoped that the Whig candidate would win, thinking that Clay might “think proper to employ me abroad.”⁵

¹ Harford to EE, 22 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

² Winthrop to EE, 11 May 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

³ EE to DW (Confidential), 29 April 1844, Reel 10, Folder 2.

⁴ Winthrop to EE, 11 May 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

⁵ EE to DW (Confidential), 29 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

It took almost a month for the news of Polk's election to reach Everett in London. Everett anxiously awaited the results, understanding that the packet of mail from the United States would have considerable importance for him and the rest of the nation. Maintaining a correspondence with Winthrop, Everett expressed some of his anxiety. Attempting to remain calm, he tried to prepare for either outcome: "The advantages and disadvantages of staying here are so nearly balanced, as to leave me greatly in doubt whether I ought to wish to stay, assuming, what is not necessarily the case, that if Mr. Clay is elected, I shall have the option."⁶ Little did Everett know that three days earlier, Winthrop had written Everett a note, informing him of the bad news. "The elections are over," Winthrop stated bluntly and "contrary to all our hopes, & to almost all our calculations Polk is the next President."⁷

Webster won election to the Senate, but it hardly consoled Everett, who, like Winthrop and P.C. Brooks, expected that he would not escape a recall. With a Democratic President-elect, Everett felt sure that Polk would recall him. Almost as soon as he heard the results, Winthrop and P.C. Brooks asked Everett if he would resign his post immediately or wait for his probable recall.⁸ Everett deliberated for several weeks about this question. To help him make this decision, Everett decided to poll his inner circle of friends and family members to ascertain their opinions on the topic.

Most of his closest friends suggested that Everett not ask for an immediate recall. Winthrop, after conversing with several of their mutual friends upon the topic, recommended that Everett "address a letter to Mr. Polk to meet with him at Washington

⁶ EE to Winthrop, 18 November 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 50.

⁷ Winthrop to EE, 15 November 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

⁸ Ibid.; Brooks to EE, 16 December 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

about the 4th of March.”⁹ Once there, he should inform the new administration that he would return “whenever it was convenient” for them to send a replacement.”¹⁰ Winthrop felt that Everett should not ask for recall before Polk’s inauguration, noting that to resign immediately would lead Polk to believe that Everett only had loyalty to John Tyler and did not want to work under the new, Democratic administration.¹¹ Not every public official, he argued, could always agree with the Executive’s politics. Winthrop told Everett that he deserved not to have to immediately give his resignation.

Others differed in degree with Winthrop’s opinion. John Q. Adams worried that Polk would select a rabidly pro-slavery Southerner to replace Everett in Great Britain and that Everett’s early resignation from the post would only quicken that process.¹² Thus, he insisted that Everett should resist asking for his recall as long as possible. Two important influences in his life, P.C. Brooks and Daniel Webster, also believed that Everett should not ask for the recall. Brooks recommended that Everett remain in England until Polk recalled him.¹³ Webster also informed Everett that he should stay.¹⁴

By the beginning of 1845, Everett expected an early recall, but he did not feel that his actions had, in any way, warranted such an action from the Polk administration. “If the new Administration were aware of its own real interest,” Everett assured Webster, “they would see the advantage of having a person here not burning with the zeal of a partisan nor desirous of wielding the office for his own political advancement, and they would appreciate the value of three years’ experience.”¹⁵ Everett, understanding political

⁹ Winthrop to EE, 28 December 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

¹⁰ Winthrop to EE, 28 December 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Brooks to EE, 30 December 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

¹⁴ EE to DW, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

¹⁵ Ibid.

realities, “did not expect considerations of this kind to prevail against the pretensions of clamorous or powerful party adherents.”¹⁶ He believed that his experience and knowledge of the workings of the court in England, his disinterest in “electioneering projects,” his lack of interest in making money for himself, and his enjoyment in “a quiet discharge of duty,” qualified him to remain in England.¹⁷

Everett agreed with Brooks and Webster and did not want to ask for his recall. In a candid letter to Senator William C. Rives, Everett explained that although he “should be disposed to anticipate my recal [sic] by soliciting it,” he decided against it. He also believed that “to solicit a recal [sic] because a party has carried an election, looks like admitting that I have administered my office in the spirit of party; the contrary of which my conscience tells me is the fact.”¹⁸ Everett also argued that the President should make the decision to recall ministers.¹⁹ Finally, Everett added that the positive remarks from the highest politicians and social classes in Great Britain also led him to this decision.²⁰

Winthrop disagreed with some of Everett’s justifications, arguing that if Henry Clay had won the election, then he and many other Whigs would have expected some Democrats to have offered their resignations.²¹ Winthrop did try to see both sides of the case and support the decision, like Webster and Adams, of Everett to remain in London. After much deliberation, Everett finally informed Winthrop that he had decided, with great hesitation, to remain in London until recalled.²²

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ EE to Sewall, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

¹⁸ EE to Rives, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ EE to DW (Private), 3 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

²¹ Winthrop to EE, 29 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

²² EE to Winthrop, 29 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

Although Everett did not intend to resign immediately, newspapers in both nations ran unauthorized articles to the contrary.²³ Believing that he would eventually receive a recall from the Polk administration, he tried to remain positive, considering the great time commitments and economic restraints that the office placed on his private life. “My reward,” he expressed to another friend [Thomas Sewall, M.D.], “is in the consciousness that I am serving my country faithfully.”²⁴

By the time Polk entered the White House, Everett had decided that he would not ask for his recall from England.²⁵ He felt that the American public would benefit from his service as U.S. minister to Great Britain, even if he did not belong to the same party as the administration. Even more, Everett believed that, as a Northern man of moderate views, he could represent the nation better than a Southerner, whom he felt Polk would place in the Ministry in Great Britain. “The extreme opinions they all entertain carry them immediately to impracticable lengths and prevent their confining themselves within the limits of the law of nations.”²⁶ He intended to remain in Great Britain as long as Polk allowed him to retain his post, in order to help complete some of the “long standing claims to a favorable result,” referring to the Oregon question and his attempt to procure for the United States fishing rights in the Bay of Fundy.²⁷

Everett’s strong work ethic earned him much respect in Great Britain. A diligent worker, Everett had started to labor immediately upon his arrival in London, and he took all aspects of his job seriously. Each day, Everett worked “six to eight hours daily in my

²³ EE to Sewall, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1; EE to Brooks, 2 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

²⁴ EE to Sewall, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

²⁵ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 239.

²⁶ EE to DW, 18 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

²⁷ EE to Winthrop, 29 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

office & on dispatch days & for two or three days before 12 or 14 hours.”²⁸ He hoped to reconcile this job with another of his primary goals while there: to “conciliate the favor of good men of all parties in this country by doing every thing...to promote a good understanding between England and the United States, which I conceive to be essential to the highest prosperity of both.”²⁹

Everett felt confident that those who had witnessed him performing his job could vouch that he worked industriously.³⁰ He also believed that he worked much harder than his predecessors in the post.³¹ Yet, throughout his years as Minister, Everett faced much criticism concerning his actions. He took great offense to any assertion that he did not provide a good service to his government. One criticism that Everett received involved his spending Christmas with Sydney Smith, “the reigning wit of London society,” only a few months into his tenure.³² Although Everett only spent two days with Smith, he endured much criticism from the American press, which claimed that the minister should find better use of his time.³³

Everett dealt with even harsher critiques from Thurlow Weed, the editor of the *Albany Evening Journal*. Weed visited London in the summer of 1843, and charged Everett with behaving like an aristocrat, a grave offense.³⁴ Weed based this review of Everett on the appearance of Everett’s carriage, which much like the Minister’s dress, which he considered too bright and lavish. Everett complained to his close friend, Robert Winthrop that Weed had exaggerated. Everett explained that he had repainted an old

²⁸ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

²⁹ EE to Graham, 6 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

³⁰ EE to Sewall, 3 January 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

³¹ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

³² Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 493.

³³ Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England*, 233.

³⁴ EE to Winthrop, 18 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1; Bartlett, “Edward Everett Reconsidered,” 442.

carriage but did not use outriders, and when he saw Weed, he had on his “ordinary diplomatic uniform,” which was the “very plainest dress in the diplomatic box.”³⁵ Everett did not want others to think of him as ostentatious and felt, in fact, surprised that after seeing the other diplomats’ uniforms, Weed would describe him so.³⁶

Winthrop reassured Everett that Weed’s comments caused no harm to his reputation and that he “heard nothing but the highest satisfaction expressed at your course by those whose good opinion is worth having.”³⁷ Winthrop also informed Everett that the *New York Herald* had claimed that Everett lacked the necessary constitution to “browbeat Great Britain in relative to Texas & Oregon, & a few Americans have thought that you were a little cold & ceremonious in your treatment of them.”³⁸ Winthrop assessed the situation, telling Everett that, “probably Stevenson had set the fashion of serving them with mint juleps & tobacco.” Winthrop likely hoped to encourage his friend with these jovial comments and conjectures. He reassured him that the majority sentiment held that no previous Minister to the British Court had “done so much for the American character abroad as yourself.”³⁹ Still, Everett objected to those who felt that the American minister in London enjoyed a carefree, leisurely lifestyle. He wanted more Americans to understand that men like Weed, who traveled to England, should not expect the Minister to spend a lot of time with them, as he often had many tasks to complete.⁴⁰

Other critics attacked Everett’s lifestyle, claiming that he should cease his literary pursuits while Minister in London.⁴¹ Another suggested that the post, at least in his

³⁵ EE to Winthrop, 18 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Winthrop to EE, 12 December 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 4.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ EE to Appleton, 27 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁴¹ EE to Winthrop, 17 May 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 49.

hands, proved merely a sinecure. Everett again took great offense to this erroneous charge. Again writing to Winthrop, Everett claimed that “the truth is (as far as the Archives of the Legation show), that from a third to a half more work is now done here than ever before, and as far as I have the means of judging, more work is done by me than by all our other Ministers abroad put together.”⁴² Everett attributed most of the extra correspondence that he dealt with to the extensive interconnection between Britain and the United States compared to other countries. Immediately before his return to the United States, Everett again faced accusations of “idling away” his time from the *Charleston Mercury*, an insinuation Everett saw “as groundless as it is unfair.”⁴³

At times, Everett felt insulted at the thought that Polk, a peer of Everett’s while in the House of Representatives, would recall him immediately. Knowing that it was safe for him to rant to P.C. Brooks, Everett had an explosion of emotion concerning this topic in late November 1844:

For though I have worked like one of his own slaves, & done twice as much work, (I may say to you) as any of my predecessors, and that with an entire abstraction from all party views; and though I have worked myself into the business, which is multifarious & arduous in the highest degree, and which a new man could master under a year or two, (I mean to put himself thoroughly into the routine), yet the plan is too responsible and confidential to be left in my hands....In fact, when I think what sort of a successor I shall be likely to have if Mr. Polk comes in & the feelings & views which will govern our relations with England, I feel serious apprehensions of the result on the public peace.⁴⁴

Everett instructed Brooks to destroy this letter after reading, realizing its harsh tone and sensitive content could upset an unintended reader.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ EE to Buchanan (Private), 7 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁴⁴ EE to Brooks, 16 November 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 5.

Everett believed that the effort required of his situation in Great Britain entailed more labor than “all of the other legations in Europe put together.”⁴⁵ Everett worked almost continuously while in Great Britain, and during his leisure time, he often thought about his duties.⁴⁶ Even when Everett’s daughter, Nancy, died unexpectedly in late 1843, a distraught Everett reluctantly attended to his public business with the British government.⁴⁷ But regardless of his strong work ethic, Everett expected Polk to recall him sooner rather than later.⁴⁸

When Polk assumed office, Everett sent repeated letters to the new president and his Secretary of State James Buchanan, requesting to know, as quickly as possible, any plans that Polk had concerning his recall.⁴⁹ Yet, four months into Polk’s presidency, Everett had received no official intelligence from Washington about his prospects of remaining U.S. Minister in Great Britain.⁵⁰ Throughout this period, much of the personal information sent from his American acquaintances led him to believe that Polk would announce his successor soon.⁵¹

Everett came to understand the situation more clearly when he started to receive reports from friends in the United States that the Polk administration had offered his current post to John C. Calhoun, who had declined.⁵² In correspondence with his superiors in the State Department, Everett felt that they included “partly significant

⁴⁵ EE to Brooks, 3 October 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ EE to Brooks, 2 January 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 1; EE to Brooks, 2 November 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 4.

⁴⁸ EE to DW (Private), 3 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

⁴⁹ EE to Polk (Private), 3 March 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51; EE to Buchanan (Private and Confidential), 3 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52; EE to Buchanan, 18 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁵⁰ EE to Brooks, 15 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2; EE to Brooks, 16 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁵¹ EE to Brooks, 3 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

⁵² Adams to EE, 30 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

intimations of their design to get rid of me.”⁵³ By mid 1845, Everett had accepted the high probability that Polk would replace him. In one communication with his father-in-law, Everett said:

It seems a silly thing, the moment a man has acquired that experience & personal knowledge of men & things which are necessary to enable him to perform his duty efficiently, that he should, without any misbehavior, be ousted to make way for a new hand, who must of necessity be a long time in working his way into the business. But this is the condition of political life in our country. Had our friends succeeded, changes would have been made. I am quite convinced that it is best for us all to come home.⁵⁴

Obviously dissatisfied and disillusioned with political process, Everett would likely leave public life after his return to the United States. Private life appealed to him, as he discovered that involvement in American politics, did not “gratify a generous ambition or reward honest service,” characteristics Everett felt he embodied fully.⁵⁵

In June, Everett began to plan for his autumnal exit. Without any knowledge of his permanence in London, he did not know what to do about securing his house, carriage, and servants with extended contracts.⁵⁶ Several of Everett’s contracts verged on expiration, and he had already encountered difficulties in retaining employees who expected to lose their jobs soon. Also, temporary arrangements, Everett complained to his father-in-law, proved both difficult to procure and expensive. Showing much generosity, Sir James Graham allowed Everett and his family to remain in their rented house until September, when Everett would have a clearer knowledge of his tenure as Minister.⁵⁷

⁵³ EE to Brooks, 2 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁵⁴ EE to Brooks, 18 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

⁵⁵ EE to DW (Confidential), 29 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

⁵⁶ EE to Brooks, 2 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁵⁷ EE to Brooks (Private), 2 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

In the last days of June, Polk's recall finally arrived, informing Everett that he could expect Louis McLane, his replacement, to arrive in early August.⁵⁸ Both Polk and Buchanan hoped that he would continue to work at his post until McLane arrived.⁵⁹ Once certain of his future, on June 28, 1845, Everett had the sad duty to inform Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen that he had finally received his recall from Washington. Both men had expressed several times to Everett their desire that the Polk administration make no change to Everett's position.⁶⁰ Everett also thanked them for their kindness throughout his tenure.

He expressed his respects especially to Lord Aberdeen, with whom he had worked closely with for several years. Everett explained their relationship in a private letter to his father-in-law, which informed him that after Polk's victory, Lord Aberdeen, in particular never saw Everett without requesting that he not ask for his recall. "On the part of some persons," Everett realized, "I sit down these speeches on to civility; but Lord A[berdeen] is a man of few words; of a degree of shyness approaching to severity of manner, but with real kindness of heart beneath it."⁶¹ Of all the letters asking or hoping that Everett remain in Great Britain, he knew that Lord Aberdeen's contained only the most sincere emotions. "I shall be very sorry," Everett told Aberdeen, "to leave England particularly so to break off my personal relations with you."⁶² Aberdeen replied in kind, telling Everett that "it is with the most painful feelings that I look to the cessation of our official and personal intercourse."⁶³

⁵⁸ Polk to EE, 13 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁵⁹ Buchanan to EE, 26 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁶⁰ EE to Peel, 28 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77; EE to Aberdeen, 28 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁶¹ EE to Brooks (Private), 2 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 1.

⁶² EE to Aberdeen, 28 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁶³ Aberdeen to EE, 29 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

Peel, too, expressed his disappointment in Everett's departure, noting that Louis McLane, while he offered "the best compensation that could be made" for Everett's loss, "it is a very inadequate one."⁶⁴ When later describing these comments to his father-in-law, Everett acknowledged their very friendly nature, insisting that he never had to act unfaithfully towards his government to receive such wonderful compliments.⁶⁵

Everett largely desired to stay in Great Britain, although he did admit that it he would rather leave the post than "remain in the service of an Administration which I could not cordially support."⁶⁶ Most of all, Everett did not want to depart from all of the friends he had made.⁶⁷ The kindness of his numerous acquaintances made it difficult for him to leave England, especially as Everett feared that he would ever see most of them again.⁶⁸ Everett grumped to his brother, Alexander Everett, about these upcoming losses. "After so long a residence here and the enjoyment of unbounded kindness from the best part of society," Everett said, "we shall of course have some painful feelings in leaving England. We shall be obliged to take our leave, probably forever, of many to whom we have become strongly attached on all other accounts."⁶⁹

While admitting his own sorrow in leaving, Everett praised Polk's selection of Louis McLane.⁷⁰ Everett described McLane as a gentleman with "amiable manners and...moderation of character, which are essential in a minister to this court, where he is most favorably recollected, from his former mission."⁷¹ Paying McLane a high

⁶⁴ Peel to EE, 1 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁶⁵ EE to Brooks, 2 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁶⁶ EE to Brooks, 18 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁶⁷ EE to Brooks, 2 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁶⁸ EE to Ticknor, 4 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52; EE to Walsh, 7 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁶⁹ EE to Alexander H. Everett, 5 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁷⁰ EE to Peel; EE to Aberdeen, 28 June 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁷¹ EE to Polk, 2 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

compliment, Everett explained to his brother-in-law, Nathan Hale, “for my personal reputation, I might have gained by having a successor of a different cast. But the interests at stake are too important and I hope I am too much of a patriot, to admit such a reflection.”⁷²

Aberdeen and Peel both knew McLane from his first appointment as Minister to England. Once informed of McLane’s impending arrival, many Britons lamented Everett’s departure for both public and private reasons.⁷³ Lord Mahon, Everett’s neighbor, assured Everett of the respect he carried back with him to the United States.⁷⁴ Others hoped that American politics would, at some future point, restore him as Minister to Great Britain. Lord Aberdeen and Sir Robert Peel predicted that McLane would struggle to achieve the respect that Everett had won while in Great Britain.⁷⁵ Even Prince Albert regretted the loss of Everett, complimenting his efforts towards “the promotion of a good understanding between our two countries. May your successor like you win the good will & esteem of this country.”⁷⁶ Certainly these sentiments gratified and humbled Everett, yet, they also made it more painful for him to leave. Almost daily, he received these “proofs of unaffected kindness and goodwill from all classes – not excepting the highest.”⁷⁷

Everett, no longer uncertain about his status, made plans to leave Britain in September, after a five-year absence from the United States.⁷⁸ In order to make time to prepare for the departure, Everett began to turn down invitations to many social events,

⁷² EE to Nathan Hale, 3 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁷³ Inglis to EE, 5 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁷⁴ Mahon to EE, 2 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁷⁵ Inglis to EE, 5 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3; Agricultural Society to EE, 10 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁷⁶ Prince Albert to EE, 18 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁷⁷ EE to Walsh, 23 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁷⁸ EE to Walsh, 7 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

such as meetings of the Royal Agricultural society, which he quite enjoyed, and dinners with Samuel Rogers.⁷⁹ Rogers, who had grown especially close to Everett, expressed some of the most heartfelt thanks for Everett's friendship. "What can I say to you, what can I do, in return for all your kindness?," the eighty-two year old Rogers asked his young friend, whom he felt sure he would never see again.⁸⁰ Another informed Everett that "the pleasure of being in England is greatly diminished by your leaving it."⁸¹ Many others expressed their sadness at Everett's impending departure and their pleasure in having known him.

By August, Everett had finalized his plans to leave London. Once McLane arrived in England, Everett reintroduced him to Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office.⁸² On August 4, Everett forwarded his official recall from Polk to Lord Aberdeen. Closing his official correspondence with the Foreign Secretary, Everett expressed satisfaction in having worked with him and ending some of the troubles between the two nations. He thanked Aberdeen for his candid and conciliatory attitude in all their official and private interactions. Finally, Everett expressed his feelings about the importance of the nations maintaining good relations concerning important questions, such as the Oregon issue.⁸³ In September, the Everetts boarded a steamer bound for the United States, with many friends wishing them well, including the actor William C. Macready, who wished that "calm seas and auspicious gales" would carry them back to their native land.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ EE to Clive, 10 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52; EE to Hudson, 10 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁸⁰ Rogers to EE, 31 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

⁸¹ Bunsen to EE, 1 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

⁸² Aberdeen to EE, 3 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

⁸³ EE to Aberdeen, 4 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁸⁴ Macready to EE, 2 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

CHAPTER 9

ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS AND OREGON

P.C. Brooks, who had prepared Everett's house in Boston, waited anxiously on the other side of the Atlantic. Brooks had interpreted correctly Everett's feelings as he returned to the United States. "This change in your life and that of your family," he said, "is no small affair. You cannot but feel sincere regret on leaving your old friends...in England, who have treated you and your family with such marked and unvarying kindness."¹ Brooks realized that his daughter's family had lived "amid the best of society," a lifestyle much different from that of Boston.² On September 19, 1845, Edward Everett and his family arrived back in the Bay state.

In addition to the many duties Everett had to attend to upon his return, he took time to maintain the relationships he had created while in Great Britain. One of the first letters he sent upon his return to the United States informed Samuel Rogers of his safe arrival. Although back in the United States with his family, Everett already missed his "second home" and the kindness of friends such as Rogers, whom Everett requested a reply from, desirous to see his "exquisitely neat handwriting telling me you have not entirely forgotten us."³ The two continued their correspondence, reassuring each other their mutual fondness and their sadness that they would likely "never meet again meet again on this side of the Grave."⁴ Thomas Grenville and Lord Mahon also had friendly feelings for Everett. Grenville hoped that, with "the rapidity with which the voyage is now accomplished from America to England" would tempt Everett to make a return

¹ Brooks to EE, 15 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

² Brooks to Charlotte (Everett's wife), 16 August 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

³ EE to Rogers, 30 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁴ Rogers to EE, 2 November 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

visit.⁵ Lord Mahon assured him that they had not forgotten him or his ability to combine his patriotic feelings with an appreciation for British institutions.⁶

Everett continued to write to and receive positive messages from many others, including Prime Minister Peel, Lord Aberdeen, and the Duke of Rutland.⁷ These letters gratified Everett, who had begun his Ministerial post with no diplomatic experience.⁸ Everett also remained in contact with friends such as Lady Ashburton and Thomas Grenville concerning non-political matters.⁹

Through all of these changes, Everett continued to stay current on the Oregon boundary controversy, and soon, the British began to call on him for advice and information concerning the important issue. In October 1845, Everett received a message from Lord Aberdeen requesting his “impressions respecting the actual state of the relations of the two countries, and the means by which they may be improved.”¹⁰ Aberdeen updated Everett on the actions of the British Foreign Office, including his recent talk with the new U.S. Minister, Louis McLane. During their conversation, Aberdeen elaborated, “our old topicks of discussion were not forgotten.”¹¹ Aberdeen hoped that the United States would offer better terms for negotiation. At this point, the Oregon question started to warrant serious concern on both sides of the Atlantic, and Aberdeen, who believed that “the question might be easily and satisfactorily settled with

⁵ Grenville to EE, 30 December 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

⁶ Mahon to EE, 1 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁷ EE to Peel; EE to Aberdeen; EE to Duke of Rutland, 29 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁸ EE to Appleton, 27 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

⁹ Lady Ashburton to EE, 25 February 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1; Grenville to EE, 16 April 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

¹⁰ Aberdeen to EE, 18 October 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

Mr. M'Lane in the course of half an hour," if the United States would allow such actions, attempted to restart negotiations through Pakenham.¹²

Aberdeen concluded by telling Everett, "I consider myself very fortunate in having to treat upon such matters with you, and with him."¹³ With this letter from Lord Aberdeen, Everett again found himself drawn into diplomatic affairs, in which he would need to obtain information on the current status of the Oregon Territory in the United States. On November 14, Everett responded to Aberdeen's request, informing the Foreign Minister of his strong belief that very few American citizens would accept any boundary line below the forty-ninth parallel. Many in the U.S. government, though, would agree to compromise on that line and agree to British possession of the entirety of Vancouver Island.¹⁴ Soon after this correspondence, the Polk administration gave Lord Aberdeen and the British reason to believe that compromise would prove more difficult than what Everett implied.

Like his inaugural address in March, Polk's first Annual message to Congress on December 2, 1845, ignited a fury in Great Britain concerning the Oregon Territory. In the message, Polk again called for United States ownership of all of the Oregon country. In addition, Polk asked Congress to establish a territorial government in Oregon, to terminate the joint occupation treaty concerning the territory, which had begun in 1818 and renewed indefinitely in 1827 by the United States and Great Britain, and to increase U.S. military forces to protect American emigrants in the Oregon Territory. Polk disliked European attempts to stop the United States from expanding, and he felt that British interests in the Oregon Territory did just that. Referring to the Monroe Doctrine, Polk

¹² Miller, *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 5: 39-40, 48.

¹³ Aberdeen to EE, 18 October 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

¹⁴ EE to Aberdeen, 14 November 1845, quoted in Gill, "Edward Everett, Minister," 124-5.

continued that “in the existing circumstances of the world the present is deemed a proper occasion to reiterate and reaffirm the principle avowed by Mr. Monroe and to state my cordial concurrence in its wisdom and sound policy,” and he promised swift retaliation if a European nation interfered in North America.¹⁵ On January 4, 1846, Polk described his philosophy concerning how to deal with the British, which his recent message had reflected:

The only way to treat John Bull was to look him straight in the eye; that I considered a bold and firm course on our part the pacific one; that if Congress faltered or hesitated in their course, John Bull would immediately become arrogant and more grasping in his demands; and that such had been the history of the British nation in all their contests with other powers for the last two hundred years.¹⁶

Polk’s Annual message to Congress, much like his Inaugural address, caused much excitement both in the United States and abroad. The day after his address, Winthrop described it to Everett as “nothing but defiance of all Christendom.”¹⁷ Pakenham also regarded the message as a serious issue.¹⁸ Sir Robert Peel, weary of U.S. tactics to prevent further negotiations, contemplated further military increases, readying his nation for a possible war.¹⁹ Like Lord Aberdeen, Winthrop asked Everett to keep him abreast of any matter regarding Oregon. Lord Ashburton also contacted Everett about the Oregon question, which still interested him. The U.S. Congress, he worried, had made the Oregon case more difficult, especially concerning its bold position to ending joint occupation after decades.²⁰ While Everett agreed that Polk’s message and Congress’s action hurt the negotiations, Everett also held that Pakenham’s quick dismissal of Polk’s

¹⁵ Richardson, *Messages and Papers: Polk*.

¹⁶ Polk, *Polk: Diary of a President*, 42.

¹⁷ Winthrop to EE, 3 December 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 78.

²⁰ Ashburton to EE, 6 December 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 4.

offer, in which he did not attempt to propose a substitute offer, also hindered the process.²¹

In December 1845, the British experienced unexpected political changes when Sir Robert Peel resigned due to intra-party conflict concerning the Corn Laws.²² The failure of Lord John Russell to form a Cabinet allowed the Peel Ministry to regain power.²³ Nobody outside of Prime Minister Peel's Cabinet, Mahon said, had "any...idea of what has already passed at the breaking up of Sir Robert Peel's government, or any idea at all what measures, now that his government is restored, may be in his contemplation."²⁴ He also said that the British public would not know what happened exactly until Parliament's next meeting.

Aberdeen, as part of the Peel administration, believed that his party's reinstatement into office would have "a favourable influence upon our relations with the United States."²⁵ After a short absence from office, the Foreign Secretary quickly turned his attention back to Anglo-American relations. "I was not at all surprised at the President's Message; for I expected something very similar," Aberdeen told Everett upon his receipt of the speech²⁶ "Nor am I at all sorry," he continued, "that we shall be compelled to settle the Oregon question in the course of the year, if Congress should adopt the recommendation of the President, which I take for granted will be the case."²⁷

The British reacted again with much harshness. Many questioned Polk's assertions and believed that the nations might soon go to war. Again, the fire died down

²¹ Everett to Aberdeen, 10 December 1845, quoted in Gill, "Edward Everett, Minister," 125-6.

²² Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, 47-8.

²³ Aberdeen to EE, 3 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

²⁴ Mahon to EE, 1 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

²⁵ Aberdeen to EE, 3 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

in Great Britain. By early January 1846, Aberdeen admitted to Everett that his main struggle at the moment stemmed from the U.S. withdrawal of their proposal to settle the Oregon boundary. After Pakenham's refusal, Aberdeen had no basis on which to continue negotiations, especially as the Polk administration had rejected Pakenham's attempts to renew negotiations. Feeling helpless, he claimed that he "had no resource but...to renew the offer of arbitration."²⁸ Whether or not the United States accepted the British appeal to move the Oregon negotiations to arbitration, Aberdeen felt that this move would make the British appear reasonable to the rest of the world and that it provided the most viable option for a peaceful solution. After Pakenham's refusal of the U.S. proposal, Aberdeen confided to Everett that he did not know what other options he might utilize to settle the issue diplomatically.²⁹

If the Polk administration followed the Tyler administration's lead and continued to decline arbitration of the issue, then Aberdeen at least hoped that its suggestion would spur new official talks on the terms and conditions of settling the problem. Throughout this period, Aberdeen worried that Secretary of State Buchanan would not agree to either and believed that the United States would start a war to settle the matter. If the United States did reject both courses of action, the British, Aberdeen told Everett, would consider the negotiations completely stalled. He also felt that the settlement of the Oregon boundary depended on the "real disposition of the President, and the people by whom he is directed, whether Minister or Mob."³⁰ Concluding his informative letter to Everett, Aberdeen reiterated his view that he wanted peace above all else, but that if the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

United States wanted war then the British people would also give them that.³¹ Unhappy news followed quickly, when Secretary of State Buchanan, on January 3, 1846, rejected another British arbitration offer “without opening the way to further discussion.”³²

Everett, well informed on the issue, believed that the administration wanted a Congressional measure that would help alleviate the push for war coming from many of the Western states. He told Webster that he had heard rumors that if Buchanan had not withdrawn the government’s offer, then “it would have made the basis of a further proposal by Mr. Pakenham. As it is, I am led to suppose that, for want of such a basis on which to continue the direct negotiation, the offer of arbitration has been renewed.”³³

Congress’s adoption of Polk’s recommendation to end the joint occupation of the Oregon Territory surprised few on either side of the ocean, according to Everett.³⁴ The time constraint placed upon both nations after Congress voted to end the joint occupation, Everett contended, would likely bring the parties together. He told Webster that many in England, according to an article in the London *Times*, would accept the previous U.S. proposal by Gallatin, which the British rejected in 1826, with the addition of Vancouver’s Island to them.³⁵ Throughout the Oregon boundary dispute, Everett had remained sure that Great Britain would approve of this offer, though Aberdeen had never said so explicitly.³⁶ Webster informed Everett that the Foreign Office had not sent Pakenham new instructions. Most Americans, he reported, wanted to continue negotiations rather than move down the path towards war.³⁷

³¹ Ibid.

³² Miller, *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 5: 53.

³³ EE to DW, 24 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ DW to EE, 28 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

By the end of January 1846, George Bancroft, a Massachusetts Democratic, told his friend Everett that England was starting to ease up concerning a compromise boundary.³⁸ Like Webster and Everett, Bancroft had little fear that war would occur. During early 1846, Everett had also presented Lord John Russell with a clear description of the controversy, hoping to convince him of the validity of the forty-ninth parallel and to prevent the Oregon issue from forming into a partisan problem. Everett realized that Russell, the leader of the opposition party, had much sway on British public opinion. With that power came the ability to “rally the public opinion of England against this...compromise, it will not be easy for Sir R. Peel & Lord Aberdeen to agree to it.”³⁹ In his reply, Russell expressed his satisfaction with the possibility of a newly proposed suggestion of arbitration by Prime Minister Peel. “In this state of affairs,” Russell told Everett, “I am unwilling to discuss with you the extent of concession which may be made by each party. You may be assured that I shall not attempt to embarrass our Ministers by urging them to more rigid insistency than they are disposed themselves to maintain.”⁴⁰ Russell, too, desired concession over rigidity concerning the Oregon negotiations.

Like Everett, the increased hostility to Great Britain shown by some of the U.S. national politicians had surprised Russell. This resentment, they both knew, could potentially lead the United States into war. Russell asked the former Minister, “Are the United States so...confined in their territory as to make it essential to their existence to [gain] some twelve degrees of latitude to find space for their people?”⁴¹ Russell rejected this idea, and did not desire to see the “two brother nations each strong enough to hurt the

³⁸ Bancroft to EE, 30 January 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

³⁹ EE to Russell, 28 December 1845, quoted in Gill, “Edward Everett, Minister,” 126.

⁴⁰ Russell to EE (Confidential), 3 February 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁴¹ Ibid.

other, but neither likely to profit” start a costly war.⁴² Like most other politicians in Britain at the time, Russell desired peace, but refused to sacrifice honor to maintain it.

By early February, many in the United States, including Daniel Webster, believed that the United States would decline any British proposition to send the Oregon dispute back to an arbitrator. Webster conjectured that the U.S. government would wait to deal with the Oregon issue until the British extended an offer.⁴³ Winthrop assumed that the British government would not propose a further suggestion. This worried Winthrop, who believed that the House of Representatives would vote to pass the notice to end joint occupation on February 9 and that the Senate would likely follow suit. He worried that this Congressional action would bring “little hope of our being extricated from our difficulties” with the British, concerning the Oregon Territory.⁴⁴

Everett, who wanted to prevent such difficulties, mobilized to affect British public opinion. The U.S. Minister believed that most British newspapers offered poor information to their readers on the subject of Oregon. Many of the papers, he felt, so hated the Polk administration and misconstrued the U.S. interpretation of the boundary dispute that they viewed the British government’s claims in the Oregon Territory as completely uncontestable facts.⁴⁵ Everett kept his friend, Nassau W. Senior, the economist and writer, up to date on the background of the Oregon debate, providing him with “the requisite facts and data,” including detailed histories of the negotiation attempts of 1818, 1824, and 1826.⁴⁶ Using Everett’s information, which described the forty-ninth

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ DW to EE, 5 February 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁴⁴ Winthrop to EE, 8 February 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁴⁵ EE to Davis, 16 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁴⁶ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 122; EE to Senior (Private), 5 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51; EE to Senior, 21 April 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

parallel as a fair boundary for both nations, Senior placed an article in the *Examiner* on April 26, 1845 that supported a compromise on the Oregon issue.⁴⁷ In the article, Senior first downplays the significance of the region:

The Oregon territory is really valueless to England and to America. The only use of it to England is as a hunting-ground, which enables the Hudson's Bay Company to keep up its monopoly against the English people: a monopoly which occasions many species of furs to be twice and sometimes three times as dear in London as in Leipaic. The only use of it to America would be to make it an addition to territories already far too large for good government or even for civilization.⁴⁸

Senior and Everett certainly hoped that Britons would not maintain a strong desire to hold all of the land when the article refers to the land as largely uninhabitable and miserable.

After providing a detailed geographical description and discovery history of the Oregon Territory, Senior identifies what he believes existed as the “only real point in dispute:” honor.⁴⁹ Hoping to persuade the British to support running a boundary at forty-nine degrees as an honorable compromise, Senior mentions that neither nation had done much to settle the area. Although Senior believes that few people would actually want to live in the Oregon Territory, he and Everett explain to British readers that “if a few thousands of the people of each nation were to proceed thither, and dot themselves over the best vallies [sic], much disagreeable, perhaps mischievous, quarrelling might ensue. It is clear that this ought to be prevented as soon as possible.”⁵⁰ Senior purports to the British audience that the nations can prevent such hostilities through compromise.

Finally broaching the topic of the partition, the article states that “the maximum claim of England and the minimum of America is the Columbia; the maximum of

⁴⁷ EE to Winthrop, 18 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁴⁸ *Examiner* (London), 26 April 1845, 259.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

America and the minimum of England is the 49th parallel. If each were mad enough to insist on its maximum a collision must ensue.”⁵¹ Since the United States would not accept arbitration, Senior proposes that a mutual concession, with the boundary running along “the 49th parallel, until it meets the Pacific and then the sea.” This division, he continues, “would give us [the British] more than mere contiguity entitles us to. This would give us the whole of Vancouver’s Island and it would give us an abundance of good harbours.” “It would also give us,” he added, “the country which is best for the purposes for which we use it, the fur trade. The furs to the north of the 49th parallel are better and more abundant than those to the south.”⁵²

Senior concluded that only “mere childishness” would prevent the nations from reaching a compromise, which he stressed as necessary to prevent a costly war. Everett hoped that the article, based on “the proposal” he had “always recommended” for a practical compromise, would influence people in Great Britain and counter “the hitherto unopposed claims of British extremists.”⁵³ During this period of speculation, the two men, who agreed that “Pakenham was mad to reject the 49th without reference, & Polk equally so in claiming up to the 54th,” combined efforts to insert similar articles into the *Edinburgh Review* in July 1845 and the *London Quarterly Review* in March 1846.⁵⁴

Like Everett, Winthrop also retained hope that the Oregon negotiation would ultimately find a peaceful settlement.⁵⁵ “The article in the London Examiner,” Winthrop told Everett, “gives me greater hope of ultimate success in the Oregon negotiation than

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ EE Diary, 21 April 1845, quoted in Gill, “Edward Everett, Minister,” 121; Gill, “Edward Everett, Minister,” 122.

⁵⁴ Senior to EE, 20 April 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1; Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 300.

⁵⁵ Winthrop to EE, 30 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 2.

any thing I have seen, - more especially, as we hear that it was written by Mr. [Nassau] Senior & submitted to Lord Aberdeen."⁵⁶ During his frequent meetings with Lord Aberdeen, Everett always contended that the nations should agree to a boundary at "the 49th degree of latitude to the Sound between the mainland & Quadra and Vancouver's island."⁵⁷ He believed that if England would agree to this line, then the two nations could end the dispute.

In the midst of his work concerning the Oregon boundary negotiations, in May 1846, Everett became president of Harvard University. Webster attended his friend's inauguration.⁵⁸ Even with this additional work, Everett remained up to date about the Oregon question. During the same month, on the May 15, Louis McLane informed Aberdeen that the United States had voted to end joint occupation of the Oregon Territory, which had existed indefinitely since the Convention of 1827.⁵⁹ The British reacted quickly to this news. Four days after receiving the message, Aberdeen ordered Pakenham to offer the Polk administration the Everett compromise, which he and Everett had discussed many times before, as the boundary in the Oregon Territory.⁶⁰ Aberdeen's offer proposed a boundary along the forty-ninth parallel, American access to the Straits of Juan de Fuca, a guarantee of British property below the forty-ninth line, and uninhibited British navigation of the Columbia River.⁶¹

By the first week of June 1846, action concerning Oregon began to occur quickly as negotiations opened for the final time. Aberdeen's proposal reached Pakenham on

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ EE to Davis, 16 May 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 52.

⁵⁸ Holt, *Rise and Fall*, 261.

⁵⁹ Varg, *United States Foreign Relations*, 164.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Munroe, *Louis McLane*, 532.

June 6. The new instructions from the Foreign Office led Everett and Winthrop to believe that the nations would soon sign a compromise treaty.⁶² On June 15, President Polk submitted Aberdeen's proposal to the Senate, which agreed with its terms, set the boundary along the forty-ninth parallel, gave Vancouver Island to the British, provided the British Hudson's Bay Company and British citizens trading with it the freedom to navigate the Columbia River, and allowed all British property owners living below the forty-ninth parallel kept their property.⁶³ The treaty, signed on June 15 and ratified by the United States Senate on the 18th, pleased Edward Everett as it did many Americans and Britons.

Winthrop reported to Everett that the treaty greatly relieved Pakenham and that nobody in the United States Congress, even those who had supported the "all of Oregon" campaign, like Lewis Cass, doubted that that the treaty would win ratification.⁶⁴ On the eve of the agreement, Everett wrote to Lord Aberdeen, congratulating him at the prospect of a peaceful settlement, which the two men had always desired. With that prospect cemented in the Oregon Treaty, a joyous Aberdeen replied to Everett. He explained that he had "made the terms moderate, because I wished the offer to be final; but they appeared to me...to be entirely consistent with the honour and interest of both countries."⁶⁵

On the same day that the British received the news from overseas that the United States had ratified the treaty, the Peel Ministry left office. Lord Aberdeen informed Everett of the pleasure he took in announcing the treaty on the day he left office, a legacy

⁶² Winthrop to EE, 7 June 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁶³ Miller, *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 5: 3-5.

⁶⁴ Winthrop to EE, 17 June 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁶⁵ Aberdeen to EE, 1 July 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

of his foreign policy successes, as he had no other foreign policy desire during Peel's ministry, than to settle the Oregon question. Aberdeen rejoiced about the settlement of Oregon:

It is delightful to think that there is now no question of difference remaining between our Governments, and that free scope may be given to the development of the immense commercial resources of both countries. To have contributed in any degree to this, is no small matter; and I shall look back with satisfaction to my share in these transactions to the end of my life.⁶⁶

Most who had come to know Everett during his time in Great Britain realized the importance of this question to Everett. Along with most U.S. citizens, the British celebrated the men involved in the negotiations and the resulting treaty's assurance of peaceful relations between the two nations.⁶⁷ Several others acquainted with Everett also rejoiced that the Oregon Territory no longer stood as a catalyst for aggression between the two nations.⁶⁸ Everett certainly would have agreed with the sentiment expressed by one Briton that "the really influential people of England and the United States had too much good sense to allow their respective Governments to go to war about a tract of bleak and desolate mountains."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Wormeley to EE, 3 August 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁶⁸ Parke to EE, 14 August 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

⁶⁹ Shepherd to EE, 13 August 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

CHAPTER 10
LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Several factors had culminated to create the Oregon Treaty. Events in the Oregon Territory, in part, guided the British to choose compromise. Britain had originally desired the territory for its large population of beaver and other animals with valuable pelts. The promise of wealth by developing a fur trade had sparked early British interest in the area, but by the 1840s, the once lucrative trade proved less and less profitable.¹ This, combined with the fact that the British had moved the Hudson's Bay Company north of the forty-ninth parallel, made the region below that line, which included the Columbia River, much less important to British interests. In addition, many politicians in Great Britain knew of the recent influx of United States citizens to the Oregon Territory, most of whom settled in the Willamette Valley. Like Secretary of State John C. Calhoun, the British observed that the population would likely increase, and as time passed, they assumed, Americans would overrun the Oregon Territory below the forty-ninth parallel. With little interest in Great Britain and the Peel Ministry to populate the area with British citizens, the region would quickly transform into a "*de facto* American" territory.²

Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen's determination to maintain peace between Britain and the United States also contributed to the signing of the Treaty. Throughout the Peel Ministry, Aberdeen had shown much willingness to compromise with the United States, including his decisions to send Lord Ashburton as part of the special mission to the United States in 1842 and his replacement of Henry Fox in Washington with Richard Pakenham. By mid 1846, many in England believed that the Peel Ministry would fall,

¹ Crosby, *Sir Robert Peel's Administration*, 118.

² *Ibid.*

leading to the likely return of Lord Palmerston to the Foreign Secretary post. With his past of uncooperativeness towards the United States, Lord Aberdeen feared that if Palmerston did return as the Foreign Secretary, he would not complete negotiations on the Oregon question.³ Thus, Lord Aberdeen, who had attempted in his five years as Foreign Secretary to develop peaceful relations with the United States, supported the Oregon Treaty.

In a similar vein, some argue that the Peel Ministry wanted national security, and troubles with the United States, including Oregon, remained a low priority.⁴ Compromise on the issue in 1846, then, meshed with the Ministry's goal to avoid another costly war. England had recently fought a war with China and wanted to restore peace with the other powerful nations in the world, such as France.⁵ Great Britain also had several other concerns that affected its decision to propose the Oregon Treaty. Facing a deficit of revenue, problems in India, and, as Edward Everett described to Secretary of State Upshur in one of his dispatches, "discontents in Ireland & Wales; the schism in the church of Scotland; the pervading agitation on the subject of the corn-laws, the growing divisions in the church, and the wide spread distress among the laboring classes in England," the British needed no other problems to solve.⁶ Commenting on these problems, P.C. Brooks observed to his son-in-law, "Sir Robert Peel must have his hands full."⁷

³ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 339; Jones, *Lord Aberdeen and the Americas*, 82.

⁴ Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen*, 340.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁶ Gill, "Edward Everett and Northeastern Boundary," 203; EE to Upshur (No. 49), 1 August 1843, Reel 22, Volume 46.

⁷ Brooks to EE, 15 June 1843, Everett Microfilm, Reel 9, Folder 2.

The United States had its own reasons to settle the dispute in 1846. For one, the addition of the Oregon Territory below the forty-ninth parallel to the Union balanced the recent annexation of Texas, helping to keep pro- and anti-slavery factions within the United States satisfied. Like the British, Americans anticipated the fall of the Peel administration, and with the abrasive Lord Palmerston most likely to return, the United States felt that it needed to compromise with Lord Aberdeen or risk losing the opportunity to settle the issue diplomatically.⁸

More than any other factor motivating the United States to compromise and accept the Oregon Treaty stemmed from its May 5, 1846 declaration of war on Mexico. The Polk administration, which American voters had elected on a platform of expansion and amid calls for annexing all of Oregon, accepted the Oregon Treaty overwhelmingly due to its troubles with Mexico. Polk and much of his government desperately wanted to avoid involvement in two wars simultaneously or, even more dangerous, the possibility that Great Britain and Mexico would ally against them. Thus, Polk desired a quick resolution of the Oregon question.⁹ War with England, he knew, would devastate America's chances for victory against Mexico. Also, the British Navy, which consisted of 141 steamships, dwarfed the seven maintained by the United States, making prospects of a quick or easy victory on the seas versus Great Britain unlikely.¹⁰ Fortunately for the United States, when Lord Aberdeen proposed the compromise, the British had not yet received word of the beginning of the Mexican-American War. Several American politicians, including Robert Winthrop, believed that if Great Britain had known about

⁸ Munroe, *Louis McLane*, 533.

⁹ Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed*, 49.

¹⁰ Crosby, *Sir Robert Peel's Administration*, 118.

the war, then Lord Aberdeen would not have presented the proposed treaty terms to Louis McLane.¹¹

Often left out of this list of reasons that the two countries came to an agreement in the summer of 1846 is the diligent work and suggestions of Edward Everett. Referred to by historian Daniel W. Howe as one of the best U.S. ambassadors to Britain, Everett had no diplomatic experience before assuming his post late in 1841.¹² He did possess a strong work ethic and conciliatory feelings towards the British. When Everett arrived in London, problems concerning the Northeastern boundary, the *Caroline*, and the international slave trade plagued positive relations between the United States and Great Britain. By 1842, most of these problems came to an encouraging end in the Webster-Ashburton treaty, which Everett described as an understanding “of that happiest kind which is equally honorable & advantageous to both parties, and which reflects the highest credit on the ability politicians, & temper of the negotiators & on the wisdom of their governments.”¹³

After playing a minor role in the Webster-Ashburton negotiations, Everett made an exhaustive effort to work with Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen to solve the Oregon boundary dispute. Starting in summer 1843, Everett concentrated his efforts to persuade Lord Aberdeen to accept a line of compromise between the two nations at the forty-ninth parallel. While in London, Everett always attempted to maintain a “conciliatory disposition” towards the British “on every fitting occasion, both because it is sincerely cherished by me & because I believe that its proper manifestation is conducive to that good understanding between the two countries, which I regard as of the highest

¹¹ Winthrop to EE, 18 June 1846, Everett Microfilm, Reel 12, Folder 1.

¹² Howe, *Political Culture*, 223.

¹³ EE to Appleton, 27 September 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 27, Volume 77.

importance to both.”¹⁴ He also believed that he never had to compromise the desires of his country’s government to achieve success in the diplomatic arena. While Everett enjoyed an almost unmatched popularity in the British diplomatic and literary circles, in which he met many of the leading Britons of the day, he never lost sight of his primary goal: accomplishing the instructions he received from the U.S. government. Also, he did not require money as a motivator to work. While he enjoyed the lifestyle and opportunity to better Anglo-American relations that his post offered, he did not benefit from a high salary.

In dealing with the Oregon negotiations, Everett always remained very calm and collected about his opinion concerning what settlement he thought Great Britain would accept. Everett never truly doubted that the people of the United States and those in Great Britain desired to preserve agreeable relations.¹⁵ Everett carried out his work under this assumption and with a positive outlook that the two governments would resolve the existing problem concerning Oregon without a war. Everett had frequent conversations regarding the Oregon boundary with Lord Aberdeen, who grew into one of Everett’s closest friends in England. Numerous times, Everett proposed that both nations could find happiness in a settlement that divided the Oregon Territory at the forty-ninth parallel, from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and included the southern tip of Quadra and Vancouver’s Island for the British.¹⁶ While only an educated conjecture based on mutual concessions at first, Everett pushed this idea constantly to Lord Aberdeen, and by the end of his tenure as Minister, Everett purported this as the only reasonable solution to

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ EE to DW (Confidential), 29 April 1844, Everett Microfilm, Reel 10, Folder 2.

their shared problem that upheld his nation's interests while making acceptable concessions to the British.¹⁷

Everett, always energetic and driven, had discussed and proposed terms for a settlement of the Oregon issue with Lord Aberdeen during a period when President Tyler and the State Department offered him little instruction or guidance on the topic. After the receipt of full powers to negotiate the Oregon question in September 1843, Everett had received no messages or further instructions from the Tyler administration that focused on working toward a solution concerning the issue.¹⁸ This lack of concern for Everett's efforts to solve the Oregon issue present in the Tyler administration hindered greatly Everett's ability to accomplish any official change while in England.

"Few foreign Ministers have had the opportunities of conciliating so much of personal esteem and regard as you will carry with you from this to your native country. Lady Peel & I shall always take a warm interest in all that concerns you & yours."¹⁹ These words of Sir Robert Peel followed Edward Everett back to the United States after his four-year effort as U.S. Minister to Great Britain. While working in Great Britain, Everett had extensive communications with many influential British leaders, and when he returned to the United States, he maintained many of these correspondences.²⁰ Towards the end of his life, Everett reflected on his time in Great Britain, noting that he had met many of his best friends while there.²¹ Everett's ably maintained relationships with many important British politicians upon his return, several of whom contacted him concerning the state of the Oregon issue in the United States. Although no longer officially

¹⁷ Varg, *Edward Everett*, 118.

¹⁸ EE to Calhoun (No. 269), 28 February 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 23, Volume 51.

¹⁹ Peel to EE, 1 July 1845, Everett Microfilm, Reel 11, Folder 3.

²⁰ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

²¹ Willson, *America's Ambassadors to England*, 241.

connected with the Polk administration, Everett assumed an unofficial role as liaison for Lord Aberdeen, John Russell, and other British political figures, relaying to them important information about current attitudes in the United States about the Oregon Territory. While the British often recognized a “liberal amount of bluster and braggadocio in the American personality,” they did not sense such characteristics in Edward Everett.²² The extensive contact between these men proves their trust in Everett’s advice, opinions, and reports.

Everett’s replacement in Great Britain, Louis McLane, disapproved of Everett’s continued contact with these men. McLane, who felt that Everett had discredited the Democrats to the British before leaving the United States, also believed that Everett had too much involvement with the British after his return to the United States.²³ While Everett’s personal friendships may have diminished McLane’s diplomatic role in London, his personal relationships and undeniable knowledge of the Oregon problem guided the actions of Louis McLane and the British in completing the Oregon Treaty of 1846.

Later in life, Everett assumed correctly that he had “rendered all the service which I could have done at any rate in bringing about the result [the Oregon Treaty].”²⁴ He explained his proactive approach and involvement in the Oregon issue, even after losing the opportunity to negotiate directly with Aberdeen in London:

I told Lord Aberdeen from the first what we [the United States government] could do & what we could not do, war or no war. I told him that if they insisted on going South of 49° on the mainland then was an end of the negotiation & I gave him some hope that we might leave them the whole of Vancouver’s island, which we had offered to do in 1827.

²² Jones, *American Problem in British Diplomacy*, x.

²³ Munroe, *Louis McLane*, 529.

²⁴ EE to Clayton, 6 April 1849, Everett Microfilm, Reel 25, Volume 66A.

The entire and I may...say the affectionate confidence which Lord Aberdeen now reposed in me led him to give credit to my statements on this point & to shape his instructions [to Richard Pakenham] accordingly.²⁵

Everett's frank attitude and continued attempts to persuade the British on this point prove his importance in the growing rapprochement between the United States and Britain.

²⁵ Ibid.

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VITA

Personal Background

Heather Leigh Yeargan
Born April 11, 1983, Nacogdoches, Texas
Daughter of Donald Lester and Patricia Lyn Clark
Married Shane Russell Yeargan July 24, 2005

Education

Diploma, Woden High School, Woden, 2001
Bachelor of Arts, History, University of North Texas,
Denton, 2005
Master of Arts, History, Texas Christian University,
Fort Worth, 2007

Experience

Teaching Assistantship, Texas Christian University
2005-2007

Professional Memberships

Phi Alpha Theta
Southern Historical Association

ABSTRACT

EDWARD EVERETT AND THE OREGON QUESTION: A STUDY IN PERSONAL DIPLOMACY

by Heather Leigh Yeargan, M.A., 2007
Department of History
Texas Christian University

Thesis Advisor: Kenneth R. Stevens, Professor of History and Chair of the Department

In the 1840s, the United States and Great Britain stood at the edge of war concerning the Oregon Territory in North America's Pacific Northwest. Edward Everett, the U.S. Minister in London from 1841 to 1845, worked in a complete effort to ease tensions between the nations by resolving the Oregon boundary question. Everett's unique blend of diplomatic tact, diligent work ethic, and personal aptitude enabled him to suggest and promote a compromise that suited both nations while gaining the trust of British political officials and social elites. Due largely to his ability to perceive mutually satisfying concessions and to form close relationships with key British politicians, Everett successfully laid the groundwork for the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which did much to improve Anglo-American relations.