

“The Duties of Neutrality”: The Impact of the American Civil War on British Columbia and
Vancouver Island, 1861-1865

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2010

A.A., Langara College, 2006

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Abstract

The American Civil War resulted in lasting consequences for the British Empire's remote Pacific colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Britons in the colonies mobilized to address the issue of defending against a potential American attack. Despite concerns surrounding the possibility of an American invasion, the conflict increased solidarity towards the United States, as public opinion in British Columbia and Vancouver Island became more pro-Union through the course of the American Civil War, with local residents regularly celebrating holidays like the Fourth of July. Local newspapers welcomed efforts by the American government to finally abolish slave labour, yet Victoria's African American community continued to face racial discrimination, which was often blamed on resident Southerners. The conflict ultimately helped in improving public perceptions of the United States, but not without raising significant fears of American military might on the continent.

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Introduction

Following the election of Republican Party candidate Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States in November 1860 through his sweeping victory in the North, the slaveholding states of the Deep South rapidly seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America, an independent government unrecognized by any other nation. The secessionist movement resented Lincoln's opposition to the further extension of slavery and suspected that the Republican Party hoped to eventually abolish the "peculiar institution" outright. The Confederate capture of the beleaguered Federal garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina on 14 April 1861 began a brutal, though ultimately successful four-year struggle by the American government to forcefully restore the Union. The war gripped the imagination of many Canadians across the border, who awaited the results of each major battle with excitement and fascination. Enticed by the promise of adventure and hefty bounties, thousands of Canadians served in the Union Army, while parliamentary leaders anxiously followed news of the conflict, knowing that the continental balance of power would permanently shift regardless of which sectional faction emerged victorious. Furthermore, thousands of Americans, of both Northern and Southern origin already resided throughout Canada when the fighting began, and fraternized within their respective camps in order to share the latest rumours and gossip about the war and form aid societies for the benefit of soldiers back home. As the American Civil War progressed, Southern commissioners and escaped prisoners of war travelled to Canada in the hope of either bringing the conflict to Northern soil through cross-border raids and incendiarism, or by entangling Federal units in a costly fight with neutral Great Britain. Actions like the St. Albans Raid of 19 October 1864, in which an armed group of Southern agents robbed several Vermont banks to fund the Confederate war effort and subsequently fled across the border to Canada,

caused considerable tension between the governments of Great Britain and the United States, particularly after Canadian courts refused to extradite the culprits and recognized them as military belligerents who were simply following orders.

Although the cultural and political ramifications of the American Civil War in Central and Eastern Canada have been closely studied by historians, the experience of the conflict in the British Empire's Pacific colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island is less well documented. Reliable data is lacking, but anecdotal information suggests there were more Americans living in the two colonies than settlers of British or any other origin, and most citizens of other nationalities arrived via the United States. With the large American population divided into sectarian factions, in several different ways, the Civil War played out not just in the United States, but also on British soil. Rumours of Confederate privateers were frequently reported in local newspapers, invoking the delicate issue of British neutrality and requiring clear planning on the part of colonial officials in order to avoid offending the United States government. Fear of a possible conflict between Great Britain and the United States over the 1861 Trent Affair prompted the creation of a volunteer rifle corps by local residents, and encouraged colonial officials to take private stock of the region's potential defences against American forces. Furthermore, as Victoria featured a notable African-American population, local discussions of the slavery issue can be compared and contrasted with the rights and treatment of the local Black community.

My thesis will broaden the existing understanding of not only the consequences of the conflict for British Columbia and Vancouver Island, but also how local colonial leaders and prominent citizens both viewed and imagined the sectional struggle. I argue that the impact of

the American Civil War was profound in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, affecting several important areas of colonial life from the period of 1861 to 1865. The presence of a notable American population from both the North and South raised considerable problems for colonial authorities during the Civil War, as both groups agitated in favour of their respective cause. For the African-American population of Victoria, the Civil War represented a period of heightened racial discrimination. I argue that although acts of prejudice were often connected with local Southerners, Britons in the community also practiced their own forms of racial exclusion, which were admittedly far more subtle. While the conflict was not necessarily a period of racial harmony in the colonies, Blacks watched eagerly as the United States gradually abolished slavery, and annually honoured occasions such as the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation taking effect. Britons in the colonies also expressed sincere appreciation as the Lincoln administration increasingly focused on ending slavery as a central war aim. I assert that by the conclusion of hostilities, Britons were firmly backing the Union cause, and looked with anticipation to the emergence of a United States that would finally prohibit slavery and embrace the freedom promised by the Declaration of Independence. Anxieties surrounding Anglo-American relations during the conflict generated significant fears regarding colonial defence, and motivated the efforts of local Britons to form a volunteer militia. Together these factors point to the significant consequences of the Civil War for British Columbia and Vancouver Island, and hopefully make the case that the impact of the conflict in the British Pacific colonies warrants further investigation by historians.

For my primary sources, I for the most part utilized newspapers published in both British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the period of my study, in order to provide a nuanced understanding of how the region's inhabitants experienced and viewed the American Civil War.

Newspapers represent a key site in the production of concepts and ideologies, as well as the discussion surrounding them. Although newspapers are only one of many sites of ideological construction, they are particularly powerful because they are produced by and often for elite opinion makers, particularly in highly stratified colonial societies such as British Columbia and Vancouver Island, and they help to define the range of publically acceptable opinions for a much wider population who may not even read the papers. Furthermore, letters to the editor provide an opportunity for ordinary readers to enter the debate and either reinforce accepted political and social customs or undermine them. For the city of Victoria I rely on the *Daily British Colonist* as well as the *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, both of which were produced throughout the conflict. Although other newspapers occasionally emerged in Victoria during the war, they typically folded quite quickly, and surviving copies are now rather difficult to find. Amor de Cosmos and David William Higgins, editors of the *Colonist* and *Chronicle* respectively, were both liberal reformers who advocated the liberalization of trade and later argued in favour of the colonies joining the Dominion of Canada. In British Columbia, New Westminster's *British Columbian* served as the only resource of its kind in framing popular debate about the war. Like his Victoria counterparts, John Robson, editor of the *British Columbian*, lobbied for political reform and eventually supported Confederation. All three newspapers were for the most part solidly pro-Union throughout the conflict, but periodically expressed frustration towards the United States over issues like colonial defence and the treatment of Blacks. Through a careful analysis of editorials, letters to the editor, and other commentaries, in which I rigorously study the manner in which the larger concepts and issues surrounding the Civil War were framed locally, I outline the often diverging beliefs present within the area. I also believe that such newspaper materials offer my work an important insight into the activities of American citizens, both North and South, in

the British colonies during the fighting, and help in detailing the active role they played in trying to manipulate events far removed from British Columbia and Vancouver Island. News items also offer a glimpse into concerns surrounding the defence of British Columbia and Vancouver Island throughout the American Civil War, and occasionally depict United States forces as a distinct threat to the future prospects of the colonies.

In addition to newspaper coverage of the conflict, I also relied on available despatches sent between Governor James Douglas and the British Colonial Office concerning the possible impact of the American Civil War on British Columbia and Vancouver Island. By analyzing such correspondence, I gain a greater sense of the official British stance of neutrality as applied to British Columbia and Vancouver Island, as well as the specific instructions given to Douglas in order to facilitate this policy. The colonial despatches include reports regarding both rumoured and legitimate Southern activity in the region, which were of considerable interest to my project. The issue of the feasibility of defending British Columbia and Vancouver Island against a possible American attack was also discussed throughout this period, especially as a consequence of rising tensions between Great Britain and the United States in the wake of the 1861 Trent Affair.

I also consulted the records of American Consul Allen Francis, who was stationed in Victoria beginning in 1862. Studying the letters sent back to his superiors in Washington, D.C., provides an intimate sense of his perspective on the way in which the American Civil War was being experienced by residents throughout the region, including the United States citizens whose interests he represented. A detailed account of relations between Francis and local leaders is important to my study, so I also focus on his contacts with figures like Governor James Douglas,

especially over issues such as the raising of Southern flags and the outfitting of Confederate privateers at Victoria.

My methodology largely consists of description and textual analysis, particularly in my employment of newspaper materials and colonial despatches. In my study of editorials, letters to the editor, and other commentaries, I aim to provide a detailed sense of the prevailing attitudes surrounding the American Civil War, as well as the manner in which debate over the conflict was framed. Through the careful use of description and textual analysis, I also hope to document the historical understanding of issues such as race, slavery, and secession in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, and to track whether or not popular opinion on these topics shifted as hostilities progressed from 1861 to 1865. Considering that my topic has previously been somewhat neglected by historians, the meticulous description of the way in which government officials and settlers in British Columbia and Vancouver Island followed hostilities between North and South is necessary in order to finally document this important and unique chapter in the broader history of British North America and the American Civil War. In my selection of newspaper materials and colonial despatches, I also seek to analyze changing perceptions of the Confederate and United States governments throughout the American Civil War, and determine the extent to which the Union Army was considered a military threat. Furthermore, the complicated issue of neutrality is certainly worthy of analysis, and my approach focuses on whether or not colonial leaders and residents favoured the British decision to avoid becoming entangled in the American Civil War. Newspaper analysis offers an intimate insight within the views and experiences of British Columbia and Vancouver Island residents of both British and American origin during the conflict.

The diplomatic and political elements of this history emerge in my study of the colonial despatches and reports of United States Consul Allen Francis. I use this primary material to expand on the previous scholarship on diplomatic and political relations between Great Britain and the United States during the American Civil War articulated by Robin W. Winks in *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States*, and Adam Mayers in *Dixie and the Dominion: Canada, the Confederacy, and the War for the Union*.¹ By analyzing these primary sources, I add an important element to the understanding of tension and relations between Great Britain and the United States during the period of my study. I also gain a better sense of the gravity with which local leaders, the British Colonial Office, and the United States government treated such issues.

Lastly, my methodology adopts elements of microhistory by using the work of Greg Marquis in his study *In Armageddon's Shadow: The Civil War and Canada's Maritime Provinces* as a model for how to apply the larger issues raised by the conflict to a specific region.² Through an extensive focus on British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the period of my study, I hope to offer a thorough lens into the experience and imagining of the conflict in the British Empire's remote Pacific colonies. By providing a detailed analysis of the cultural and social views of prominent residents, as well as the diplomatic and political decisions of colonial officials, I hope to offer a lens within the experience of the American Civil War in the remote colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Daniel B. Thorp's recent article "New Zealand and the American Civil War" combines several of these elements of microhistory to convincingly demonstrate the significance of the American Civil War in another remote

¹ Robin W. Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 155; Adam Mayers, *Dixie and the Dominion: Canada, the Confederacy, and the War for the Union* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2003), 12.

² Greg Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow: The Civil War and Canada's Maritime Provinces* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 40.

colony of the British Empire, New Zealand, where, like British Columbia and Vancouver Island, settlers excitedly followed hostilities between North and South, and debated larger issues like colonial defence and slavery.³ Utilizing microhistory allows me to focus on prevailing opinions at the local level regarding critical matters such as colonial defence, race, secession, and relations between Great Britain and the United States, while also affording me the opportunity of connecting these important topics with broader events and issues across North America. Such an approach helps facilitate my goal of providing an exhaustive sense of the shifting attitudes and beliefs of prominent citizens and colonial officials concerning a faraway conflict that nevertheless had a profound and lasting impact on the region.

Historiography of Canada and the American Civil War has largely focused on the impact of the conflict on Central and Eastern Canada, and in particular what is now Ontario and Quebec. While such an approach is understandable given the greater presence within these areas of significant numbers of Southern agents, escaped prisoners of war, and privateers, these authors typically neglect to consider the potential ramifications of the American Civil War on British Columbia and Vancouver Island. The previously mentioned work of Marquis does an excellent job of charting public opinion in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island during the conflict, as well as Maritime participation in both the Union Army and Confederate blockade running, but his study is geographically confined to a specific region.⁴ Wilfrid Bovey's "Confederate Agents in Canada during the American Civil War," focuses almost exclusively on Southern operatives in Montreal and Toronto, ignoring the potential for comparable activities in

³ Daniel B. Thorp, "New Zealand and the American Civil War," in *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (February 2011): 97-130.

⁴ Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 41, 44.

other Canadian communities along the border with the United States.⁵ Mayers similarly privileges the experience of the American Civil War in the Province of Canada, and in particular the efforts of Southern saboteurs to attack the Union War effort along the Great Lakes.⁶ P.G. Smith isolates his study even further, by solely documenting the actions of Confederate raiders during the 1864 St. Albans Raid in Vermont, to the detriment of the many other both real and imagined threats perpetrated by Southern agents operating elsewhere in Canada.⁷ Among Canadian historians, Winks neglects to provide any lengthy account of the impact of hostilities on British Columbia and Vancouver Island, and is ultimately rather dismissive of the notion that the conflict resulted in any enduring ramifications for the remote Pacific colonies, rarely engaging with any of the local debates that occurred regarding important issues like colonial defence, race, slavery, secession, and relations with the United States.⁸ While British Columbia and Vancouver Island experienced no traumatic convulsion from clandestine Confederate activities comparable to the St. Albans Raid, an extensive analysis of the region's cultural views and impressions of the conflict is nevertheless long overdue, and would contribute greatly to scholarly understanding of British North America throughout the American Civil War.

Scholars of Canada and the American Civil War have also tended to focus on diplomatic and political relations between Great Britain and the United States, as well as the military participation of Canadians in the Confederate and Union forces. Mark Vinet's *Canada and the American Civil War: Prelude to War*, follows the specific causes that led to sectional strife in the United States, and investigates Canadian involvement in issues like the abolition movement, but

⁵ Wilfrid Bovey, "Confederate Agents in Canada During the American Civil War," *Canadian Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (1921): 46-47.

⁶ Mayers, *Dixie and the Dominion*, 12.

⁷ P.G. Smith, "Whether it was a Bold Military Operation or a Crime, the St. Albans Raid was the Northernmost Action of the Civil War," in *Military History* 15, no. 6 (February 1999): 70.

⁸ Winks, *The Civil War Years*, 155.

does not address other equally important topics, such as colonial defence, race, secession, and cross-border relations.⁹ *Canadians in the Civil War*, by Claire Hoy, studies the estimated 30-50,000 Canadians who fought in the conflict and the myriad reasons that motivated their participation, yet frequently generalizes during the course of her discussions surrounding Canadian perceptions of the fighting, and avoids considering possible regional differences of opinion.¹⁰ Winks also favours the broader diplomatic and political elements of the American Civil War, and in particular their role in fostering tension between leading figures in Great Britain and the United States, rather than the prevailing attitudes and views of both ordinary and prominent citizens, journalists, and other writers eagerly reporting on the conflict.¹¹ Though macro relations are important to any understanding of the American Civil War, there is no substitute for the study of interactions between British subjects and American citizens, both North and South, at the local level during the conflict. A detailed analysis of such relations will provide further insight into the popular attitudes and views of residents throughout the region during this period, in addition to their overall cultural and political impression of faraway hostilities.

Although several historians have emphasized Canadian participation in the abolition movement, few scholars have investigated popular attitudes regarding race in Canada as pertaining to the American Civil War. Marquis does an excellent job of exploring the discrimination and segregation faced by the Black minority in the Maritimes throughout the mid-nineteenth century, and challenges the notion that Canadians were less racist than their American

⁹ Mark Vinet, *Canada and the American Civil War: Prelude to War* (Vaudreuil-Sur-Le-Lac, Wadem, 2001), 13.

¹⁰ Claire Hoy, *Canadians in the Civil War* (Toronto: McArthur and Company, 2004), vi-vii.

¹¹ Robin W. Winks, *The Civil War Years*, 5.

counterparts during this period.¹² Although Marquis ably demonstrates that Canadian opposition to slavery did not suggest a belief in racial equality, his study is limited to the Maritimes, and would suggest that further work is needed throughout Canada, particularly in other areas inhabited by a significant African American population, such as Victoria, Vancouver Island. Vinet also addresses Canadian hostility to slavery and assistance to the Underground Railroad, but avoids linking these issues with prevailing views concerning race in Canada at the commencement of sectional conflict in the United States.¹³ In *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, Winks documents the challenges experienced by African-Americans in Vancouver Island and British Columbia during the American Civil War, and provides a vivid account of Blacks in the colonies, yet avoids connecting his work with the conflict itself, which leaves his narrative feeling rather disconnected and incomplete.¹⁴ Furthermore, his chapter in *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* concerning British Columbia and Vancouver Island focuses primarily on the diplomatic and political climate in the colonies, and almost ignores the issue of race altogether.¹⁵ In my work I attempt to engage with the traditional local opposition to slavery as discussed by historians of Canada and the American Civil War, while exploring the issue further to include popular notions regarding race and segregation, which were of considerable importance to my study given the significant African-American community present in Victoria, Vancouver Island in the mid-nineteenth century. By investigating the myriad linkages between the issues of race and slavery, particularly in discussions of the region's fledgling African-American community as hostilities progressed, I hope to gain further insight into public discussions of the conflict, and the often muddled relationship between abolitionism and racism.

¹² Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 59, 63.

¹³ Vinet, *Canada and the American Civil War*, 13.

¹⁴ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 278-280.

¹⁵ Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years*, 5.

I engage with my secondary sources in order to properly contextualize relations between Great Britain and the United States during the American Civil War. The issue of colonial defence was of particular concern throughout British North America during this period, especially following incidents such as the 1861 Trent Affair and 1864 St. Albans Raid, which escalated tensions and warned of possible conflict with the United States. I apply this broader contextual material to British Columbia and Vancouver Island whenever possible, while identifying the notable scholarly gaps within the region, and attempting to provide a clearer picture of these rather isolated and remote colonies throughout the conflict. I wish to make the case that secondary literature on my topic has failed to recognize that sectional strife in the United States held ramifications for the entirety of British North America, not just the densely populated borderland separating the Province of Canada and the Northern States. Finally, I try to challenge what previous scholars have labelled as essential to an understanding of Canada and the United States during the American Civil War, by emphasizing the critical role played by rumour, gossip, and public opinion in framing popular debate surrounding the conflict, rather than attempted raids by Confederate agents and high level diplomacy, although such events were certainly important as well.

I adapt elements of several theoretical frameworks throughout the course of my study, combining elements of social, political, and diplomatic history. I utilize an emphasis on social and cultural history through my selection of primary sources stressing the popular debates and opinions surrounding the conflict, such as newspaper editorials, local gossip and rumours, and letters to the editor. While diplomatic and political history influences my thesis, and is reflected in the colonial despatches that I gathered for analysis, I firmly believe that newspaper materials represent the best available possibility of gaining a solid grasp of the popular and public

discourse that occurred in British Columbia and Victoria during the American Civil War on issues such as colonial defence, race, secession, slavery, and relations between Great Britain and the United States. In effect, I hope to accomplish a new approach to diplomatic history, with my application of social history to existing diplomatic and political sources. Furthermore, I frame both Pacific colonies as remote and isolated outposts of the British Empire that nevertheless felt the dramatic impact of the distant conflict, due to extensive and ongoing trading ties to the United States, the presence of a sizeable American population, and fears regarding colonial defence. My use of description and textual analysis cohere in my emphasis on the critical importance of social and cultural history in any study of British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the American Civil War, so that scholars may better understand the diverging opinions and perceptions held by many residents concerning a faraway conflict that captured their imagination, and seemed to hold the future of the continent squarely in the balance. By looking beyond the consequences of the fighting for prominent Euro-Americans and colonial leaders, to the views of ordinary residents and the treatment of the Black minority in the colonies, I hopefully provide a vivid social portrait of British Columbia and Vancouver Island during a period when the contentious issues of the day, such as race and slavery, were being decided on distant battlefields. Only by recognizing what a diverse range of approaches and methodologies have to offer historical scholarship can we ever hope to gain a truly nuanced understanding of a specific region or event from the past.

Lastly, a note on key terms. I occasionally refer to British Columbia and Vancouver Island as the British Pacific colonies, simply as a means of distinguishing them from the other provinces of British North America. When I mention the provinces of British North America, I am referring to the various British colonies on the continent that during the Civil War included

British Columbia, Vancouver Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and the Province of Canada, which was comprised of contemporary Ontario and Quebec. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to all British subjects present within British Columbia and Vancouver Island as Britons, regardless of their length of residency in North America.

Although the region also boasted many inhabitants originally from the eastern provinces of British North America by the time of the Civil War, who may have self-identified as ‘Canadian’, rather than ‘British’, I did not find any distinction made between Britons and Canadians in the primary literature during this period. Regarding the United States, I tend to use the terms American federal government, North, Northern United States, and the Union interchangeably, all of which are in reference to the states governed by the administration of President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War that fought to suppress the Southern bid for independence. In the case of the Confederate States of America, I often flow between terms such as the Confederacy, the South, the Southern Confederacy, and the Southern United States, yet all refer to the American states that seceded from the North during the Civil War, and strived to maintain their independence from the Union government. As far as population groups within the colonies are concerned, I regularly utilize the term Euro-American as a means of describing settlers of European ancestry, who typically fell within the national categories of either Americans or Britons. Such a term was often useful in analyzing discussions and events where nationality was not made explicit, but the ethnic makeup of the historical actors in question was fairly obvious. I also use African-American or Black as a means of describing free Blacks and ex-slaves of African ethnic heritage, many of whom settled in British Columbia and Vancouver Island following the 1858 Fraser Gold Rush.

Chapter 1: “Destitute of any Protection”: Concerns Regarding Colonial Defence in British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the American Civil War

The American Civil War between the Northern and Southern States, pitting massive modern armies comprised of many thousand soldiers against each other, captured the fear and imagination of British North America residents, including those in British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Adopting a strict course of neutrality, the British government refused to favour either faction in the conflict, yet relations with the United States were nevertheless strained throughout the conflict by incidents such as the Trent Affair, when American naval forces removed a pair of Confederate diplomats from a British vessel. The subsequent war scare alarmed not only the British government, but also colonial leadership and press outlets in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, which feared the vulnerability of the remote colonies to the United States. At the time of the Civil War British Columbia and Vancouver Island were cut off from the rest of British North America by the Rocky Mountains because of the absence of any transcontinental railway system.¹ With a combined population of perhaps only 14,000 people, the colonies appeared vulnerable in comparison with their American neighbours across the border, as by 1860 California alone hosted almost 400,000 residents.² Despite the absence of a significant settler population, the colonies were regarded as important to the British Empire, given their strategic proximity to lucrative Asian markets.³ This palpable sense of isolation and vulnerability, coupled with knowledge of the region’s geopolitical significance, heightened anxieties within British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the American Civil War, since the colonies could merely watch as the United States mobilized powerful armies seemingly

¹ Barry M. Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971), 198.

² Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 198.

³ *Ibid.*, 198.

capable of conquering British power in North America with ease. In this chapter I argue that the American Civil War raised considerable concern among colonial officials of British Columbia and Vancouver Island and the local press, both of which feared the possibility of war erupting between Great Britain and the United States. Fear of a potential invasion by the United States sparked by the beginning of the American Civil War played a critical role in both the formation of new volunteer militia units on British Columbia and Vancouver Island, as well as the frequent urging by colonial leaders and area newspapers for additional reinforcements from Great Britain. Though Robin W. Winks, in his study *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States*, remarks that “British forces on the Pacific Slope remained unchanged during the American Civil War,” such a statement neither does justice to the vivid concerns frequently portrayed among colonial correspondence and press clippings of the period, nor accounts for the sudden interest among Euro-American settlers in the creation of volunteer militia units.⁴ The ability of the United States to effortlessly muster such immense forces by the end of the American Civil War and suppress the tenacious Southern bid for independence raised anxieties in the colonies that in the aftermath of victory, the American government might attempt to conquer the entirety of British North America.

In the decades prior to the American Civil War, Great Britain and the United States engaged in an intense rivalry for imperial control of the Pacific Coast of North America. Tension in the Pacific Northwest between Great Britain and the United States developed gradually, rising to prominence in 1810 with the American Fur Company’s establishment of Fort Astoria, in contemporary Oregon, which implicitly established United States control over the strategic

⁴ Robin W. Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 158.

Columbia River before the British Northwest Company could respond.⁵ In an effort to assert control of the region, the Royal Navy coerced the sale of Fort Astoria to the North West Company during the War of 1812, but this controversial act instead blurred the issue of sovereignty in the region for decades.⁶ In addition to command of the strategic Columbia River, which was considered essential to dominance of the region, both sides wanted to monopolize the lucrative fur trade. Several years later, American and British representatives met to resolve the border between British North America and the United States, but the Anglo-American Convention of 1818 failed to deliver an agreement to divide the Oregon Country, which consisted of modern British Columbia, all of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, as well as parts of Montana and Wyoming. Representatives instead settled for a decade-long joint occupation of the area, in which both countries were to maintain equal rights. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 briefly appeared to signal a breakthrough, as Spain relinquished to the United States any remaining claim to the Pacific Coast north of the 42nd parallel, but after another series of bilateral talks a partition again failed to materialize.⁷ Further discussions proved similarly fruitless, and in 1828, with few alternatives available, Britain and the United States indefinitely renewed the agreement on joint occupation. The issue of sovereignty in the Pacific Northwest reached a crisis level with the victory of James Knox Polk in the 1844 American presidential election, due in part to his campaign platform of expansionism calling for the United States to acquire the entirety of the Oregon Country.⁸ Polk was a firm believer in the concept of Manifest Destiny, which believed that the United States would inevitably control the entirety of North America. Despite

⁵ Mike Vouri, *Outpost of Empire: The Royal Marines and the Occupation of San Juan Island* (Seattle: Northwest Interpretive Association, 2004), 3.

⁶ Vouri, *Outpost of Empire*, 3.

⁷ Frederick Merk, *The Oregon Question: Essays in Anglo-American Diplomacy and Politics* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 37.

⁸ Keith Murray, *The Pig War* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1968), 11.

his belligerent rhetoric, Polk was willing to negotiate over the region's territorial status since he preferred war with Mexico, not Great Britain.⁹ Despite his bluster, threats from the campaign helped to initiate productive negotiations over the Oregon Country, since many settlers loyal to Great Britain feared that Polk's administration would begin an armed struggle to expand the borders of the United States.¹⁰ British cabinets throughout the period feared the prospect of war with the United States due to the logistical difficulties of administrating and supplying British North America across the Atlantic Ocean.¹¹ As a result Great Britain eagerly signed the 1846 Treaty of Oregon with the United States, which finally established a permanent continental border through the extension of the 49th parallel west of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. The peaceful partition of the Oregon Country guaranteed both sides an outlet to the Pacific Ocean, along with a vital link to future maritime trade with Asia. Even with the document, Great Britain still feared the possibility of a war in the Pacific Northwest, especially one initiated by the American desire to achieve Manifest Destiny. The British government hardly treated the border along the 49th parallel delineated by the Treaty of Oregon as a guaranteed bulwark against American expansionism.¹² Following the Great Migration of almost a thousand Americans to the Oregon Country in 1843, the British government also worried about the possibility of agrarian settlers acting as a filibustering expedition by provoking a war to join the United States.¹³ Although the Treaty of Oregon awarded all of Vancouver Island to Great Britain, the agreement was vague about the border separating Vancouver Island from the mainland and left open the

⁹ Murray, *The Pig War*, 11.

¹⁰ Ken S. Coates, "Border Crossings: Pattern and Processes along the Canada-United States Boundary West of the Rockies," in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, ed. John M. Findlay and Ken S. Coates, 14 (Seattle: Centre For the Study of the Pacific Northwest, 2002).

¹¹ Allen C. Guelzo, *The Crisis of the American Republic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 232-233.

¹² Doug Owrarn, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1980), 28.

¹³ Owrarn, *Promise of Eden*, 28.

status of the San Juan Islands, which were claimed by both powers. Both sides claimed exclusion ownership to the San Juan Island but could not enforce their demand, so the islands fell under joint occupation until a permanent settlement could be reached. This contentious ambiguity surrounding the maritime border raised further concerns of conflict erupting between Great Britain and the United States. These fears were eventually realized during the Pig War of 1859, when the killing of a pig belonging to an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company by an American resident prompted General William Harney, Commander of the Department of Oregon, to occupy San Juan Island with United States forces led by Captain George Pickett, who later served as a leading general in the Confederate States of America.¹⁴ Governor James Douglas of British Columbia and Vancouver Island responded by ordering Admiral Robert Baynes, Commander of the Royal Navy Pacific Station, to land marines on San Juan Island and engage the American soldiers present. Baynes flatly refused, preferring not to provoke war with the United States over such a trivial dispute, and instead landed the Royal Marines in a purely defensive manner.¹⁵ A tense truce followed as both sides set up camp on the island. Peace prevailed, as the San Juan Islands would remain under joint occupation until 1872 when an international commission awarded them to the United States. To colonial administrators in both Great Britain and the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, the Pig War was considered simply more aggressive posturing on the part of the United States, analogous to Polk's election campaign in 1844. The dispute yet again raised the prospect of American expansionism working to initiate an armed struggle with Great Britain in order to achieve Manifest Destiny. As the Civil War closely followed the events of 1859, it appeared to fit with a larger pattern of United States aggression to expand and establish dominance over North

¹⁴ Vouri, *Outpost of Empire*, 35.

¹⁵ Will Dawson, *The War That Was Never Fought* (Princeton: Auerbach, 1971), 83.

America. Rather than suddenly signalling the threat of the United States in the region, the American Civil War was merely yet another chapter in a decades-long imperial rivalry with Great Britain over the Pacific Coast. Where the American Civil War differed from these earlier threats of armed conflict was in the ability of the United States to rapidly field massive armies that seemed easily capable of overwhelming the meagre defences of British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

The outbreak of the American Civil War raised concerns among local colonial officials in British Columbia and Vancouver Island regarding the potential for the conflict to gradually implicate the British government, which sought to follow a strict course of neutrality. Canadians recognized that in the event of war between Great Britain and the United States, Canada would become a key battleground, which made the preservation of amicable relations a vital issue throughout British North America.¹⁶ On 20 August 1861 Governor James Douglas wrote to Secretary of State for the Colonies Henry Pelham-Clinton, the Duke of Newcastle, acknowledging receipt of Queen Victoria's recent "Proclamation for the maintenance of Neutrality pending the hostilities existing between the United States of America and the States which have seceded from that Confederation."¹⁷ Douglas was instructed to widely publicize the British government's stance within the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, in the hope of avoiding the possibility of any ignorant or reckless settlers, many of whom were American by birth, committing actions favourable to either the North or South that might

¹⁶ Helen G. MacDonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 79.

¹⁷ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, August 20, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed July 6, 2011).

embroil Great Britain in a conflict that was considered an internal problem of the United States.¹⁸ In another letter written to Newcastle the very next day, Douglas responded to the British government's granting of belligerent rights to the Confederate States of America, which allowed the South, though not recognized diplomatically, to purchase goods within the empire and take out significant loans.¹⁹ Douglas emphasized the importance of abstaining "from any act which may violate the conditions of strictest neutrality," and stated his intentions of following orders "that nothing should be done by the Naval Forces indicative of partiality or preference of either party in the conflict."²⁰ Despite the observance of neutrality in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, fears remained among local colonial officials that the naval forces of the North and South might attempt to bring captured prizes to neutral British ports, which Newcastle informed Douglas was to be prohibited under all circumstances.²¹ By following the British government's firm neutral stance, local colonial officials in British Columbia and Vancouver Island hoped to avoid becoming military and politically entangled in the American Civil War.

The beginning of the American Civil War in the spring of 1861 coincided with renewed efforts to form a volunteer militia in Victoria, Vancouver Island, which were also motivated by ongoing fears of local Indigenous peoples. On four occasions between 15 June and 9 October

¹⁸ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, August 20, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

¹⁹ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, August 21, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 14, 2011).

²⁰ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, August 21, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

²¹ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, August 2, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 13, 2011).

1861 the *Daily British Colonist* reported on the resurgence of interest in local defence.²² Although the newspaper bemoaned the lack of a current militia to protect the colony, the *Colonist* noted that several prominent residents were urging the formation of a volunteer rifle corps, for the avowed purpose of defending Vancouver Island from possible depredations by Indigenous peoples.²³ The *Colonist* wished the project success, but doubted the likelihood of “any serious outbreak among the Indians.”²⁴ Despite the paper’s apparent lack of concern regarding the threat of an Aboriginal uprising, the *Colonist* nevertheless commented on the necessity for the British government to reinforce the region.²⁵ In addition to the perceived threat from Indigenous peoples, local work towards the formation of a volunteer militia and the hope of the *Colonist* for reinforcements from Great Britain were almost certainly motivated in part by concerns regarding the potential impact of the American Civil War in British Columbia and Vancouver Island. As reported in the *Colonist*, Governor Douglas soon inspected plans for the creation of the volunteer rifle corps, and expressed his support for the measure.²⁶ Over twenty members of the new rifle corps were sworn in that summer, followed by voting to select a lieutenant-colonel to lead the regiment, both of which clearly demonstrated rising concerns over colonial defence.²⁷ While local efforts to form a volunteer militia unit gradually lost momentum, the Pioneer Rifle Corps, consisting of local African Americans, many of whom had escaped racial persecution in the United States prior to the start of the American Civil War, continued to

²² *Daily British Colonist*, “Volunteers,” June 15, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Rifle Corps,” June 25, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Rifle Volunteers,” July 2, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “African Rifles,” October 9, 1861, 3.

²³ *Daily British Colonist*, “Volunteers,” 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Rifle Corps,” 3.

²⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Rifle Volunteers,” July 2, 1861, 3.

drill and conduct exercises throughout the period.²⁸ The *Colonist* commended the “very good style” displayed by the Pioneer Rifle Corps during an exercise at Beacon Hill Park where “quite a number of rounds of blank cartridges were fired to resist an imaginary cavalry attack,” and regretted the absence of similar energy and planning on the part of the volunteer militia recently formed by Anglo-American residents.²⁹ Local settlers in Victoria responded to their sense of vulnerability to attack by attempting to reinvigorate efforts to form a volunteer militia, which would hopefully manage to meet any threat to colonial defence. The potential of a conflict emerging between Great Britain and the United States in the North Pacific almost certainly played a role in local debates regarding the importance of creating and sustaining volunteer units for the defence of the area.

Relations between Great Britain and United States worsened considerably following the November 1861 Trent Affair, when Confederate diplomats James Murray Mason and John Slidell were seized by the U.S.S. *San Jacinto* while aboard the British mail packet *Trent*. The British government regarded the capture of the Confederate Commissioners seeking European recognition of the Confederate States of America as a violation of international law, while the Lincoln administration tried to justify the action through the argument that Mason and Slidell were not diplomatic envoys, but in fact guilty of treason against the United States. Press outlets in Canada, such as the Toronto *Patriot* and Montreal *Gazette*, reacted in an almost uniformly hostile manner to American actions during the Trent Affair, and offered a patriotic response to the prospect of war with the United States.³⁰ The *Colonist* reported on the Trent Affair on seven separate occasions between 4 December 1861 and 13 January 1862, and, reflecting broader

²⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “African Rifles,” 3.

²⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰ Macdonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War*, 95, 99, 121, 145.

Canadian public opinion, utterly condemned the actions of Captain Charles Wilkes of the *San Jacinto*, yet expressed a sincere desire for peace.³¹ The Trent Affair shifted thinking in the colonies regarding the issue of colonial defence, alerting settlers to the possibility of war erupting between Great Britain and the United States. New Westminster's *British Columbian* only discussed the Trent Affair sporadically, and updated readers on the tense state of Anglo-American relations on 12 December 1861 and January 9 1862, criticizing the actions of the United States government, but expressing doubt that the international incident would result in armed conflict.³² As testament to the seriousness with which the British government treated the possibility of war, between 12 December 1861 and 4 January 1862, the height of the Trent Affair crisis, more than 11,000 regular soldiers were dispatched to British North America.³³ The Trent Affair also played an important role in prompting the passage by the United Province of Canada of the Modified Militia Bill, which vastly improved the defence of British North America through the formation of 25,000 trained volunteers and a reserve force of an additional 25,000, all at an estimated cost of \$500,000.³⁴ The *Colonist* later welcomed with obvious relief the "highly gratifying" news of Mason and Slidell's release, which postponed the immediate threat of conflict visiting the region, and remarked in conciliatory fashion that "war between two great nations kindred in blood and language is thus happily avoided."³⁵ The rest of Canada similarly rejoiced over the American decision to back down from the brink of crisis, which thankfully

³¹ *Daily British Colonist*, "The News from the States," December 4, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "War between England and the United States," December 5, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "Our Position in Case of War with the United States," December 6, 1861, 2; *British Columbian*, "Are we Likely to Have War with the United States?" December 12, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "Mason and Slidell," December 14, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "A War Cloud," December 23, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The News," December 30, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The News," January 13, 1862, 2.

³² *British Columbian*, "Are we Likely to Have War with the United States?" December 12, 1861, 2; *British Columbian*, "The War Cloud," January 9, 1862, 2.

³³ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 200-201.

³⁴ Macdonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War*, 101.

³⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, "The News," January 13, 1862, 2.

meant at least the temporary preservation of peace.³⁶ The Trent Affair, regardless of the bravado displayed by local papers in predicting an easy victory by the Royal Navy, called the attention of local residents to the grim prospect of war between the United States and Great Britain, as well as its costly implications for the future development of British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

Colonial officials in British Columbia and Vancouver Island shared the concerns of local press outlets regarding the Trent Affair. Writing to Newcastle on 28 December 1861, Douglas agreed with the British government's stance, and articulated local concerns that the Trent Affair might threaten Anglo-American relations.³⁷ Fearing the potential outbreak of war between Great Britain and the United States, Douglas took the opportunity in his letter to review available defences and discuss strategic measures in the event of war.³⁸ Douglas declared that the Royal Engineers stationed in British Columbia and the Royal Marines in disputed San Juan Island, "forming in all about 200 rank and file," constituted the only land forces available to the colonies within the region, while the frigate *Topaze*, surveying ship *Hecate*, and gunboats *Forward* and *Grappler* represented British naval power, although the *Forward* required new boilers in order to be made serviceable.³⁹ Aside from occasional visits from other corvettes and frigates, the Royal Navy vessels referenced by Douglas amounted to the only maritime force in the region, responsible for protecting a vast coastline, with the nearest reinforcements thousands of kilometres away in the event of war.⁴⁰ Douglas expressed considerable disquiet about the viability of the British government defending remote British Columbia and Vancouver Island in

³⁶ Macdonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War*, 146.

³⁷ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, December 28, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 14, 2011).

³⁸ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, December 28, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 199.

a protracted war with the United States, given the greater ease with which the Lincoln administration could reinforce its Pacific holdings.⁴¹ Requesting instructions regarding what kind of assistance would arrive during a war between Great Britain and the United States, Douglas revealed the legitimate fears felt by local colonial officials over the difficult prospects of defending British Columbia and Vancouver Island from American forces.⁴² British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, supported by the Colonial Office, suggested the reinforcement of British Columbia and Vancouver Island by redeploying units from China and increasing the presence of the Royal Navy, but the Duke of Somerset, First Lord of the Admiralty, believed that current strength sufficed, and as a result no additional troops were ever sent.⁴³ The correspondence of Douglas demonstrated the seriousness with which not just local colonial officials, but also the British government, treated the likelihood of a conflict emerging between Great Britain and the United States as a result of tensions fostered by the American Civil War. The complications and misunderstandings that emerged from British efforts to maintain strict neutrality during the war, as evidenced by the Trent Affair, created a charged atmosphere in which hostilities with the Lincoln administration appeared probable, which aggravated fears of annexation to the United States in British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

Discussions surrounding the critical need for improving defensive measures in the region emerged again during the following spring. The launching of the ironclad USS *Monitor* by the United States Navy in early 1862 alerted settlers in the colonies to the threat of powerful American warships in the region. From 7 May to 19 July 1862, the *Colonist* featured four articles

⁴¹ James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, December 28, 1861." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 200.

discussing the urgent need to improve local defences.⁴⁴ The newspaper expressed considerable fear over the recent innovation of ironclad vessels, which were already being utilized to significant effect by both sides in the American Civil War, and could easily overpower any wooden vessels currently deployed by the Royal Navy.⁴⁵ Noting vocal calls by California residents for the presence of an American ironclad on the Pacific Coast, the paper predicted the inevitability of similar demands by settlers in Oregon and Washington Territory, and requested the matching of any such force by the British government.⁴⁶ The newspaper also lamented the lack of commitment and interest in the rifle corps project, which the paper considered “worthy of support and encouragement.”⁴⁷ That summer, the *Colonist* reported with dismay on news of the imminent reorganization of the now dubbed Vancouver Island Volunteer Corps.⁴⁸ The *Colonist* admitted the numerous inadequacies of the current corps but firmly believed that the organization “might have been revived without resorting to the singular expedient of killing it off to start it anew.”⁴⁹ Given the perceived need to establish and sustain a local defensive force, especially in light of the awe-inspiring military power the United States was fielding against the South in the American Civil War, the paper urged the critical importance of creating a committed group of well-trained and disciplined members within the volunteer rifle corps that would gradually increase as the population of Vancouver Island expanded.⁵⁰ The newspaper even made a point of singling out the United States as by far the most dangerous potential foe to British

⁴⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, “A Floating Battery,” May 7, 1862, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “Rifle Corps,” May 10, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Rifle Corps Meeting,” June 21, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Reorganisation of the Rifle Volunteers,” July 19, 1862, 2.

⁴⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “A Floating Battery,” 2.

⁴⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “Rifle Corps,” May 10, 1862, 3.

⁴⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “Reorganisation of the Rifle Volunteers,” July 19, 1862, 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Columbia and Vancouver Island.⁵¹ While Winks argues that in attempting to form militia units, volunteers in British Columbia and Vancouver Island were motivated primarily by “the supposed Indian menace,” the obvious worries directed towards the military ascendancy of the United States contradict this view.⁵² The debate portrayed by the *Colonist* increasingly emphasized the prominence of concerns surrounding the importance of both improving and supporting defensive measures, with a clear focus on the powerful United States military as the obvious threat to British power in the region.

Even following reports of the peaceful resolution of the Trent Affair, and the release of Confederate Commissioners James Murray Mason and John Slidell by the Lincoln administration, fears of an armed conflict between Great Britain and the United States lingered in British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Writing to his father, an influential British politician, Royal Navy officer Edmund Hope Verney, commander of the HMS *Grappler* in the region from 1862 to 1865, expressed the urgency of improving regional defences, particularly in the event of an attack by American ironclads.⁵³ Verney anxiously alluded to the rumours surrounding the construction by the United States navy of ironclads in San Francisco, stressing that “in the event of war with America, we are not likely to have sufficient warning of it to construct ‘Monitors’ to meet an enemy.”⁵⁴ Pressing the importance of responding to the American threat, Verney insisted that current naval defences were sorely lacking, explaining “it will not be fair to ask the *Grappler* to give an account of two ‘Monitors’ within the next three months: for the *Forward*

⁵¹ Ibid., 2.

⁵² Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States*, 162.

⁵³ Edmund Hope Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, ed. Allan Pritchard (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 95-96.

⁵⁴ Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 95-96.

would not be available in case of war, as she is having new boilers put in.”⁵⁵ According to Verney, the only solution was to begin the construction of ironclad vessels in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, which he contended was plausible provided that the proper dockyard facilities were established at Esquimalt.⁵⁶ “If two are being built at San Francisco, two should be built here,” Verney asserted, “and put under the commanders of the *Forward* and *Grappler*, whose crews should be trained to man them and work their guns in case of war.”⁵⁷

Douglas wrote to Newcastle on 15 January 1863, also detailing his concerns surrounding rumours that the United States Navy was planning to deploy ironclad vessels to the region, which Douglas believed represented a grave threat to British sovereignty on the Pacific Coast, given his intelligence from local Royal Navy officers that “any sort of iron or iron clad vessel slipping from the opposite shores across the straits could without fail destroy a whole Squadron of our wooden ships without receiving any injury herself.”⁵⁸ With gossip pointing to the imminent American deployment of four ironclad warships to the region, including the Columbia River and Puget Sound, Douglas was considerably alarmed, urging his superiors back home to match the United States Navy “in order that something may be done for our protection,” and even offered the testimony of Captain George Henry Richards of the HMS *Hecate* “vessels of the suitable Character for Coast defence could be built at Victoria of Douglas Pine,” provided that the necessary metal was shipped from Great Britain.⁵⁹ Douglas felt convinced that instead of escalating tensions, the construction of similar ironclad vessels by the British government would

⁵⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁸ James Douglas, “Douglas to Newcastle, January 15, 1863.” Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 15, 2011).

⁵⁹ James Douglas, “Douglas to Newcastle, January 15, 1863.” Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

prevent an outbreak of hostilities. He believed that the Lincoln administration would readily engage in a war with Great Britain if victory appeared likely, which might result in the loss of British Columbia and Vancouver Island to the United States.⁶⁰ Thomas Maitland, Commander of the Royal Navy Pacific Station from 1860 to 1862 also urged the deployment of an ironclad to the region in order to match the American threat, but to no avail.⁶¹ Douglas warned Newcastle that the British government's refusal to formally recognize the independence of the South and perceived entertaining of Confederate diplomats had dangerously alienated both Northern and Southern factions of the American Civil War, predicting that "the very day these people unite again as a nation they will unite in a war with England."⁶² With no sign of a decisive Northern victory by early 1863, and frustration mounting within the Lincoln administration, many Canadians worried that the American government, if compelled to accept Southern independence, would eagerly settle for conquering British North America as a substitute.⁶³ The *Victoria Daily Chronicle* echoed the concerns of Douglas regarding the critical need to improve defensive measures against the powerful United States.⁶⁴ The *Chronicle* shared these worries concerning the lengthy amount of time necessary to organize a national militia army capable of repelling seasoned American troops.⁶⁵ Regardless of the ability and commitment of militia units, as well as the deployment of additional reinforcements from the British government, the grave risk the colonies faced to a sudden and dramatic conflict with veteran United States forces seasoned by the horrific American Civil War was palpable to both local leadership and the press.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 207.

⁶² James Douglas, "Douglas to Newcastle, January 15, 1863." Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

⁶³ Macdonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War*, 147.

⁶⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "British Colonial Defences," November 22, 1864, 2.

⁶⁵ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "British Colonial Defences," 2.

In British Columbia, efforts to form a volunteer rifle corps began in earnest in late 1863, and were motivated in part by the departure of the Royal Engineers as a regular military force to defend the fledgling colony. On eight separate occasions between 7 November 1863 and 4 January 1865 the *British Columbian* reported on efforts in New Westminster to form a militia unit.⁶⁶ With the disbandment and withdrawal of the Royal Engineers, the newspaper asserted that the colony was “left destitute of any protection,” which exposed the necessity of establishing a volunteer force.⁶⁷ The removal of the Royal Engineers during the American Civil War resulted in British Columbia depending entirely for its defence on the Royal Navy, made all the worse by heightened tensions between Great Britain and the United States.⁶⁸ The *British Columbian* editorialized that “any force which could now be organized would not be likely to prove very effective in protecting the country against invasion by disciplined troops,” hinting at the possibility of an attempt by the United States military to conquer the region in the event that relations deteriorated with Great Britain.⁶⁹ Notice of a public meeting on the subject of organizing a militia appeared in the *British Columbian* that fall, with the newspaper firmly supporting efforts to bolster local defences.⁷⁰ The organization of the now styled New Westminster Volunteer Rifle Company progressed rapidly, with the unit featuring almost a hundred members⁷¹ By early the following year the corps boasted consistently large musters,

⁶⁶ *British Columbian*, “A Volunteer Rifle Company,” November 7, 1863, 1; *British Columbian*, “Volunteer Rifle Association,” November 11, 1863, 2; *British Columbian*, “Shoulder Arms!” November 11, 1863, 3; *British Columbian*, “We Need a Military or Naval Force,” November 14, 1863, 2; *British Columbian*, “New Westminster Volunteer Rifle Company, No. 1,” November 28, 1863, 2; *British Columbian*, “The Volunteer Rifle Company,” December 2, 1863, 1; *British Columbian*, “N.W.V. Rifle Corps,” February 6, 1864, 3; *British Columbian*, “The Rifle Corps,” January 4, 1865, 3.

⁶⁷ *British Columbian*, “A Volunteer Rifle Company,” 1.

⁶⁸ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 207.

⁶⁹ *British Columbian*, *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁰ *British Columbian*, “Volunteer Rifle Association,” 2; *British Columbian*, “Shoulder Arms!” 3.

⁷¹ *British Columbian*, “The Volunteer Rifle Company,” 1.

arms and ammunition for all members, as well as new uniforms.⁷² It is important to note that the Chilcotin War of later that spring also generated significant anxieties over the issue of defence, particularly concerning the potential for future Aboriginal uprisings in the colonies. During the brief Chilcotin War, which began on 29 April, over a dozen workers engaged in constructing a road from Bute Inlet, on the mainland coast, through the British Columbia Interior were killed by members of the Tsilhqot'in people, in an act of defiant violence that shocked the settler population. By this point the Colony of British Columbia had its own governor, Frederick Seymour, who received word of the attacks weeks later. Armed parties were sent to the Interior on the pretext of arranging peace talks, captured the leaders responsible for the attacks, tried them as criminals, and eventually executed seven of them. Like fears surrounding the possibility of hostilities erupting between Great Britain and the United States, the Chilcotin War served to galvanize efforts to mobilize volunteers in the colonies. By early 1865 the New Westminster volunteers were established within a new drill room that conducted regular meetings, and hosted an address from Seymour, in which he lauded "the high state of efficiency to which they had attained in so brief a period."⁷³ The New Westminster Volunteer Rifle Corps continued to meet until the end of the American Civil War, and the rapidity with which the organization was created and developed offered testament to the critical importance placed on defending the colonies as a result of fears raised concerning a possible war between Great Britain and the United States.

The issue of the volunteer rifle corps movement remained a prominent topic in Victoria newspapers until the end of the American Civil War, given ongoing anxiety surrounding the

⁷² *British Columbian*, "N.W.V. Rifle Corps," February 6, 1864, 3.

⁷³ *British Columbian*, "The Rifle Corps," January 4, 1865, 3.

perceived military vulnerability of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. By early 1864 the Pioneer Rifle Corps, composed entirely of members of the Black community, remained the only available volunteer regiment in Vancouver Island, aside from a minor force in Nanaimo, a fact not lost on Euro-American settlers.⁷⁴ On six separate occasions from 14 January 1864 to 17 January 1865 the *Victoria Daily Chronicle* reported eagerly on local measures to form a volunteer militia, and consistently advocated the improvement of colonial defences.⁷⁵ The *Colonist* also followed renewed efforts to form a rifle corps with interest, publishing eight articles between 13 May 1864 and 4 February 1865 on the subject.⁷⁶ A preliminary meeting in the spring of 1864 for the formation of a new volunteer rifle corps managed to elicit pledges of enrolment from enough individuals to fill an entire company, and later that spring the volunteers were finally equipped with rifles and bayonets.⁷⁷ Dressed in their new uniforms, the volunteer rifles soon began conducting regular drills, much to the satisfaction of the local press, which praised their efficiency.⁷⁸ During festivities celebrating the birthday of Queen Victoria on 24 May, the Victoria Volunteer Rifle Corps, under the command of Captain Lang, was formally reviewed by the Governor of Vancouver Island Arthur Kennedy, who took over for the retired James Douglas earlier that spring, and “addressed a few words to the company commending their efficiency and zeal.”⁷⁹ The new volunteers formally swore an oath of allegiance to Queen

⁷⁴ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 207.

⁷⁵ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Our Defences,” January 14, 1864, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “New Volunteer Corps,” March 17, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Rifle Corps,” March 19, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Rifle Volunteers,” May 6, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Rifle Corps,” May 22, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Rifle Corps,” January 17, 1865, 3.

⁷⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “Victoria Rifles,” May 13, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Birthday Festivities,” May 26, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Swearing In of the Rifle Corps,” June 18, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Volunteer Concert,” September 14, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Volunteer Concert,” 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “New Recruits,” October 26, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Victoria Volunteer Rifles,” December 6, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Grant to the Rifle Corps,” February 4, 1865, 3.

⁷⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “New Volunteer Corps,” 3.

⁷⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Rifle Corps,” May 22, 1864, 3.

⁷⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Birthday Festivities,” May 26, 1864, 3.

Victoria on 18 June, administered by Chief Justice of Vancouver Island David Cameron, after which the corps marched publicly through the streets of Victoria.⁸⁰ Instead of losing momentum, as in former efforts to form a volunteer company, further progress only continued, and by early 1865, the rifle corps was hosted at a hall on Broughton Street and conducting regular drill meetings, which offered a clear indication of the renewed commitment to colonial defence evident among the white settler population.⁸¹ As evidence of the gravity with which local officials now treated the issue of protecting British interests in the region, the colonial assembly awarded a substantial grant of \$1,000 to the Victoria Volunteer Rifle Corps.⁸² With the end of the American Civil War in clear sight, the Euro-American residents of Vancouver Island were at last responding to the prominent concerns of local colonial officials and the press over the perceived military vulnerability of British power in the North Pacific to the ascendant United States, and making meaningful preparations for the defence of the region.

The conclusion of the American Civil War exposed local colonial officials and the press to the considerable vulnerability of British Columbia and Vancouver Island to the immense and now victorious army of the United States, which it was feared might now attempt to conquer British North America outright, rather than peacefully demobilize. The *British Columbian*, in a lengthy editorial published on 13 May 1865, warned readers that the end of hostilities between the Northern and Southern States might signal the beginning of an armed struggle between Great Britain and the United States for control of North America.⁸³ Arguing that the demobilization of such an immense army into peacetime labour presented challenges for the American

⁸⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, "Swearing In of the Rifle Corps," June 18, 1864, 3.

⁸¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Rifle Corps," January 17, 1865, 3.

⁸² *Daily British Colonist*, "Grant to the Rifle Corps," February 4, 1865, 3.

⁸³ *British Columbian*, "The End of the War," May 13, 1865, 2.

government, the *British Columbian* intimated that finding another battlefield was an easier task, which made British North America an appealing target for the United States.⁸⁴ Upon learning of the final victory of the United States against the South, Admiral Joseph Denman, fearing the possibility of a surprise American attack, departed Valparaiso, Chile for Vancouver Island aboard the 35-gun HMS *Sutlej*, to defend British power in the region if required.⁸⁵ In a letter to Secretary of the Admiralty Lord Clarence Paget written soon after the war, Denman shared the concerns of the *British Columbian*, vividly articulating his pessimistic outlook on the future prospects of the colonies.⁸⁶ Casting doubt on the loyalty of existing settlers, Denman characterized the population of the region as largely foreign born, which he expected might hinder efforts to organize an effective militia in the event of an armed conflict that threatened British Columbia and Vancouver Island.⁸⁷ The paltry land forces available to defend the colonies consisted of merely rifle volunteers and the Royal Marines stationed at San Juan Island, while maritime protection was entirely based on the few vessels currently dispatched by the Royal Navy.⁸⁸ Denman regarded the situation as dire enough to warrant the sheer abandonment of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, since he considered it contrary to the strategic interests of Great Britain “to maintain Colonies so remote, and which can only be secured to her by strong fortifications and a very considerable military force.”⁸⁹ He questioned the feasibility of administering the faraway outposts from the British Colonial Office, and argued “it would be greatly for the interest of England to divest herself of these possessions by any means consistent

⁸⁴ *British Columbian*, “The End of the War,” 2.

⁸⁵ Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America*, 208.

⁸⁶ Joseph Denman, “To Secretary to the Admiralty, London, 3 June 1865,” in *British Columbia Colonial Correspondence, 1857-1872*, 1-9 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1940).

⁸⁷ Joseph Denman, “To Secretary to the Admiralty, London,” 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

with honor and with justice to the English settlers.”⁹⁰ For Denman, the debilitating costs associated with governing colonies that contributed almost nothing to the prosperity of the British Empire was an excessive waste the Colonial Office needed to do away with in order to prevent American territorial ambitions in the North Pacific from embroiling the British government in a potentially devastating conflict. The American Civil War signalled to local colonial officials in British Columbia and Vancouver Island that the massive military forces of the United States constituted a grave threat to not only British power in the North Pacific, but also the peace and security of the fledgling colonies.

Even with the end of the American Civil War, British Columbia and Vancouver Island remained in a state of perpetual insecurity from lingering fears that the triumphant United States forces might try to conquer British North America through sheer strength of arms, rather than peacefully demobilize. The conflict exposed colonial leaders and local press outlets to the tenuous grip of British power in the North Pacific, as well as the military ascendancy of the United States, which threatened to permanently shift the continental balance of power. The vivid war scares provoked by international incidents like the Trent Affair, which severely tested diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the United States, motivated calls for additional reinforcements from the home government, and prompted local efforts to form militia units in British Columbia and Vancouver Island. While the often longed for deployment of further British regulars and Royal Navy vessels failed to materialize, by the conclusion of the American Civil War both colonies could at least boast armed, trained, and uniformed volunteer rifle corps, though their ability to repel an anticipated attack from the United States would thankfully never be formally tested in combat. Regardless of the peace that ultimately prevailed between Great

⁹⁰ Ibid., 7.

Britain and the United States, the almost constant anxiety of invasion depicted in colonial despatches and newspaper articles simply cannot be ignored, and vividly speaks to the fearful manner in which local leaders and writers in British Columbia and Vancouver Island viewed the conflict, as well as its devastating potential to implicate them in any war with the American government

Chapter 2: “Our Distant, but Still Very Near and Dear Brothers in Victoria”: The Impact of Confederate and United States Citizens in British Columbia and Vancouver Island During the American Civil War

During the American Civil War, the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island played host to expatriates from both the Northern and Southern United States, who represented a significant challenge to the local colonial administration. Regardless of their isolated position from the major battlefields of the conflict, Americans from the North and South organized into competing factions within the colonies for the explicit purpose of aiding their respective causes, despite the firm neutral stance of the British government. While relations among both groups remained largely civil during the course of the war, isolated cases of hostility and violence were occasionally reported. These typically took the form of fighting and vandalism, although the threat of wider hostilities erupting between Confederate and Union agitators was always a distinct possibility. In this chapter, I argue that the notable presence of Americans of both Northern and Southern origin posed considerable risks to the desire of the colonial government to enforce the British policy of neutrality during the American Civil War. I assert that rumours of Confederate efforts to outfit privateers in Victoria raised fears among both colonial officials and the American Consulate, and even threatened to damage relations between Great Britain and the United States. I also argue that the raising of Confederate flags by Southern supporters and sympathizers in Victoria irritated Northerners in the community, and similarly created the sobering prospect of increasing bitterness and ill feeling among local Americans of Union sentiment towards both the colonial administration and British government. Lastly, I contend that British Columbia and Vancouver experienced an influx of Americans fleeing across the border to escape military service. This provoked the interest of United States forces in the area, which hoped to encourage the return of any deserters in Victoria to active duty.

The significant American population of both Northern and Southern origin presented considerable challenges to the enforcement of British neutrality in British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the American Civil War. The colonies hosted thousands of residents originally from the United States, who made up a notable, if not a majority, percentage of the population. Royal Navy officer Edmund Hope Verney, commander of the HMS *Grappler*, explained in a letter to his father that “Americans in this colony are fairly balanced as regards North and South.”¹ Following the commencement of hostilities, sympathizers of both factions quickly began organizing. On three separate occasions between 26 September 1861 and 26 November 1862 the *Daily British Colonist* noted the efforts of loyal Americans in Victoria to raise funds for the Union war effort.² Union fund raising also caught the attention of the *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, which reported twice on the subject between 5 June 1863 and 29 January 1864.³ During the fall of 1861 the *Colonist* informed readers of an upcoming meeting of “all American citizens who are friends of the Union,” at the Lyceum in Victoria, to raise funds to assist families “whose husbands, brothers, or fathers have volunteered in the service of the United States.”⁴ Several weeks later the Union Fund Committee urged further donations, and informed Union supporters in Victoria that donations collected by 15 November would immediately be forwarded to the United States via the steamer *Pacific*.⁵ The donations raised by the Union Relief Fund, ultimately totalling an impressive \$1,000 in American funds, reached Washington, DC the following spring, with a further \$300 following soon after aboard another

¹ Edmund Hope Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, ed. Allan Pritchard (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 142.

² *Daily British Colonist*, “American Meeting,” September 26, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “To Loyal Americans,” November 13, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Union Relief Fund,” March 14, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “U.S. Consul’s Address,” November 26, 1862, 3.

³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Letter from ‘Father’ Bellows,” June 5, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Bread on the Water,” January 29, 1864, 3.

⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, “American Meeting,” 3.

⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “To Loyal Americans,” 2.

steamer.⁶ The Union Fund Committee, responsible for organizing the subscriptions, even received a sincere letter of thanks from Henry Whitney Bellows, president of the United States Sanitary Commission, an American government agency that coordinated wartime contributions for the benefit of soldiers.⁷ Moved by the relatively large contribution raised by Americans so far away from the conflict, Bellows declared “let our distant, but still very near and dear brothers in Victoria believe that their kindness touches our hearts most deeply,” and assured donors that their efforts would help in reunifying the United States.⁸ The Union Fund Committee also received a letter from Reverend T. Starr King of San Francisco, who acted as the intermediary for the contributions to the United States Sanitary Commission, in which he revealed that Bellows “was deeply moved and gratified by your patriotism and generosity,” to the point of praising the act in the American House of Representatives, as well as to government officials and the popular press.⁹ Later that year United States Consul Allen Francis solicited additional donations to the United States Sanitary Commission, in an address in which he praised the overwhelming generosity displayed previously through the Union Relief Fund, and called on loyal Americans to stand by their nation in its most pressing time of need.¹⁰ Donations were now collected directly at the American Consulate, rather than the Union Relief Fund, with Francis promising to publish a list of donors in Victoria newspapers each week.¹¹ The local Northern population continued to support the Union war effort, as indicated by another grateful letter from Bellows received during the following spring, in which he thanked loyal Americans in Victoria

⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Union Relief Fund,” 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “U.S. Consul’s Address,” 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

for donating a further \$1,227.48 in United States funds.¹² Later on in the conflict a group of American women in Victoria notably donated \$300 through the United States Consulate for the benefit of freed slaves in Union-occupied Southern territory.¹³ The Northern ladies sent their sizeable contribution to United States Vice President Hannibal Hamlin, who forwarded the funds to General Rufus Saxton, military governor of the Department of the South, where it was used to aid an institution for the education and support of liberated slaves.¹⁴ Loyal Union supporters in Victoria managed to effectively organize and make a notable contribution to the Northern war effort. The Northern born population of Victoria openly collected funds for the explicit purpose of donating the proceeds raised to the Union cause, with apparently no opposition from local colonial authorities. Though too far removed from the horrific struggle to decide the fate of the Union, Victoria's American residents of Northern loyalty played a role, however minor, in affecting the ultimate result of the Civil War.

Southern supporters of United States origin similarly organized in British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the American Civil War. On five separate occasions between 25 December 1861 and 16 September 1864, the *Colonist* reported on the efforts of Southerners in Victoria to organize in the aid of the Confederate cause.¹⁵ The *Colonist* hinted at the presence of a Southern population in Victoria during the winter of 1861 when the American revenue cutter *Jefferson Davis*, named after the president of the Confederacy, was readied for sale at auction in Port Townsend, Washington Territory, recommending to readers that the "admirers of Jeff.

¹² *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Letter from 'Father' Bellows," 3.

¹³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "'Bread on the Water,'" 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, "The 'Jeff. Davis'," December 25, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Confederate Meeting," May 12, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "The New Saloons," August 1 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Traitors in Victoria," December 2, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Confederate Saloon," September 16, 1864, 4.

Davis in this vicinity ought to club together and purchase her.”¹⁶ The presence of Southerners in the region also caught the attention of U.S. Consul Allen Francis, who wrote to American Secretary of State William Seward on October 1st 1862 that “congregated here and in towns of British Columbia, are some desperate men from the rebel states, talking of expeditions to California and Nevada Territory, for revolutionary purposes.”¹⁷ Francis assured Seward he was closely monitoring the activities of local secessionists, and would request the intervention of colonial authorities “if any demonstration is made, or any of their schemes are developed.”¹⁸ In the following spring, Francis told Seward “this city, for the past three or four months, has been the headquarters of a number of desperate secessionists ready, from indications, for any unlawful enterprise.”¹⁹ Later on in the conflict, Southerners in Victoria conducted a meeting for the purpose of raising money for the Confederate cause, and that evening collected a staggering \$1,400, which notably eclipsed the donations made by the Northern oriented Union Relief Fund over several months during the previous year.²⁰ Francis also noted the efforts of local Southerners to raise funds for the Confederate cause, informing Seward “in British Columbia and this city the rebels have raised by subscriptions a considerable amount of money.”²¹ With a club of around fifty members, Southerners soon began holding regular meetings and hoped provide ongoing assistance to the Confederate war effort.²² The organization openly and defiantly

¹⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The ‘Jeff. Davis’,” 3.

¹⁷ Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, October 1, 1862,” in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 3-4 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

¹⁸ Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State, October 1, 1862,” 4.

¹⁹ Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, February 14, 1863,” in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 3-4 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

²⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “Confederate Meeting,” 3.

²¹ Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, April 14, 1863,” in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 3 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

²² *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Southern Club,” May 23, 1863, 3.

promoted support of the Confederacy, with the hope of advancing the Southern cause from the remote British Pacific colonies.²³ Southerners even met regularly at the bar of the St. Nicholas Hotel in Victoria to plan schemes against the Union.²⁴ Another venue friendly to the rebel cause, the Confederate Saloon, opened that summer in Victoria under the management of Southerners Shapard and Townsend, who according to the local press “respectfully invited “the attendance of their friends.”²⁵ With a name designed to attract attention, the Confederate Saloon sought to serve as a meeting place for Southern supporters and sympathizers to exchange war news and gossip while monitoring the battlefield fortunes of the Confederacy from afar. The Southern Association included members from both colonies, and its president, Jules David, wrote to Judah P. Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of State, to acquire a letter of marque so that a vessel in the colony could serve a privateer, though the scheme was never brought to fruition.²⁶ This provides evidence that Southerners in British Columbia and Vancouver Island were not always just meeting to drink and discuss the latest war news, but were in fact, occasionally engaged in the planning of plots designed to disrupt the Union war effort. British neutrality was an obvious afterthought in such schemes, subordinated by Americans of Southern origin to the perceived greater goal of assuring the lasting independence of the Confederate States of America. By the end of the year, the Portland *Oregonian* took notice of rumoured Confederate activities in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, in an attempt “to awaken the loyal citizens of Oregon and Washington to a sense of their insecurity,” as noted by the *Colonist*, which characterized the report titled “Traitors in Victoria” as sensationalist.²⁷ The *Oregonian* piece, reprinted in full by

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴ Robin W. Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 164.

²⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “The New Saloons,” 3.

²⁶ Winks, *The Civil War Years*, 164.

²⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “Traitors in Victoria,” 3.

the *Colonist*, described the American population of the colonies as firmly behind the Southern banner, proclaiming “it is well-known that the great majority of men born within the United States who have made their home in British Columbia since the war commenced, are base rebels at heart, and would scarcely hesitate to concoct any scheme or consummate any deed by which to wreak their fiendish hate upon the loyal people of the North.”²⁸ Though the *Colonist* accused the Portland newspaper of exaggerating the issue, the clear concern expressed by the *Oregonian* demonstrated that loyal Americans on the Pacific Coast of the United States were fearful of the potential implications of Confederate activities in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, and for good reason. Even in simply raising funds for the Southern cause and providing a haven for local supporters and sympathizers to organize, Confederate agitators in British Columbia and Vancouver Island constituted a significant threat to both the enforcement of strict British neutrality by local colonial officials and the Union war effort.

Newspapers in British Columbia and Vancouver Island frequently provided readers with coverage of gossip surrounding Confederate attempts to outfit privateers in the region. These reports resulted in a local response by colonial officials to meet the perceived increase in risk to shipping and raised concerns among United States consul Allen Francis, which risked upsetting relations with the American population of Northern origin. On eight separate occasions from 5 February 1863 to 6 January 1864 the *Colonist* addressed rumours of Southern plots, but typically took a skeptical tone regarding the supposed privateering threat.²⁹ In contrast, the *Chronicle* took

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “Confederate Privateer,” February 5, 1863, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “Weakening,” February 11, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Vanquished,” February 13, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The U.S. Gunboat Saginaw,” May 13, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Privateering,” July 16, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “How Privateering Will Affect Victoria,” July 18, 1863, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “Arrival of the U.S. Steamer ‘Narragansett,’” December 24, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “U.S.S. Narragansett,” January 6, 1864, 3.

such rumours seriously, and focused on the local danger of privateers in prominent articles published between 8 May 1863 and 5 July 1864.³⁰ In early 1863 the local press began reporting on a rumoured Southern plot involving a Confederate commodore identified only as “Manly” visiting Victoria to purchase the steamer *Thames*, in order to attack Union vessels operating in the Pacific.³¹ The *Colonist* considered the entire story an utter fabrication of the *Chronicle*, and pointed to the serious consequences of the news item for relations between Great Britain and the United States, warning that the story was declared a fraud, “but not till the Federal authorities in Washington Territory and the Consul of the United States here had been excited by apprehensions that a bold privateer would sail from our port.”³² The newspaper regretted that such rumours would result in nearby United States officials developing a negative impression of Victoria, “creating on the part of American authorities, a perfect system of espionage in our midst, and raising an ill feeling between Americans and our people.”³³ To defend its claims the *Chronicle* published a pair of letters by John Jeffreys, who argued that the plot was genuine, and accused David Higgins, the editor of the *Chronicle*, of betraying his confidence.³⁴ Jeffreys originally hailed from Alabama, and was an important figure in the early cattle industry of British Columbia.³⁵ The vessel targeted for conversion to a privateer was identified as the American revenue cutter *Shubrick*, which conducted routine customs and guard duty in the Puget

³⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Another Privateer Rumor,” May 8, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Has the ‘Fusi Yama’ Turned Privateer?” June 23, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “An Editorial Sufferer,” July 1, 1863, 1; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “U.S. War Vessel at Esquimalt,” December 24, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Rumor,” April 23, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “A Confederate ‘Blow Out,’” July 5, 1864, 3.

³¹ *Daily British Colonist*, “Confederate Privateer,” 2.

³² *Ibid.*, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ Benjamin F. Gilbert, “Rumours of Confederate Privateers Operating in Victoria, Vancouver Island,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* XVIII, nos. 3 and 4 (July-October 1954): 243-244.

³⁵ F.W. Laing, “Some Pioneers of the Cattle Industry,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (October 1942): 260.

Sound area.³⁶ In his memoir, *The Mystic Spring, and Other Tales of Western Life*, Higgins explains that Jeffreys accosted him following a party in celebration of a Confederate victory and claimed to have letters of marque, before informing him of the privateering scheme.³⁷ According to Higgins, Jeffreys asked him to print false leads in the *Chronicle* to put Francis on the wrong trail, which may explain the confusion in the press surrounding the precise individuals and vessels involved in the plot.³⁸ Francis eventually discovered the plan regardless, which Higgins attributes to his intricate network of detectives and informants.³⁹ In a letter to Seward from 14 February, the consul revealed that rumours of the Southern scheme circulated to him in January.⁴⁰ In contrast to the *Colonist*, he took the plot seriously, believing that Manly, while perhaps not a Confederate commodore, was planning a privateering operation.⁴¹ Francis informed Seward that, as Higgins suggested, he was indebted to the intelligence provided to him by local Union supporters, articulating that “during the stay of Manly in the city, every movement towards the consummation of the scheme, was directed to me, and I was prepared to meet it.”⁴² He also noted that since the departure of Manly and his accomplices after their failure to secure the funds to purchase the *Thames*, further rumours had emerged involving the revenue cutter *Shubrick*, as discussed in the *Chronicle*.⁴³ The *Chronicle* and Francis expressed justifiable concerns, given that soon after, on the arrival of the *Shubrick* at Victoria, Victor Smith, the Collector of Customs for Puget Sound, discharged the entire crew of the ship for their suspected

³⁶ Gilbert, “Rumours of Confederate Privateers Operating in Victoria,” 246.

³⁷ David William Higgins, *The Mystic Spring, and Other Tales of Western Life* (New York: Broadway Publishing Company, 1908), 82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁰ Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State, February 14, 1863,” 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

disloyalty, save for Captain Selden and the chief engineer.”⁴⁴ Despite the doubts voiced by the *Colonist*, the *Chronicle* and Francis were responding to a legitimate plot threatening American shipping in the region.

Later that spring reports emerged of the departure, from the Clyde, Scotland, of a powerful Confederate raider, bound for the Pacific Coast, although concrete evidence of a Southern plot failed to appear. The *Chronicle* expressed wonder that privateers had so far failed to capitalize on the vulnerability of Union commerce in the Pacific, given that “at least two steamers with treasure might be captured before a word of the seizure could by any possibility be known at San Francisco.”⁴⁵ In a letter to Seward earlier that spring, Francis felt compelled enough by the constant circulation of rumours, as well as “the exposed condition of our commerce,” to recommend the deployment of an American warship to the area.⁴⁶ The United States Navy dispatched the gunboat U.S.S. *Saginaw* to the region, which visited Esquimalt on 12 May, and briefly cruised through Puget Sound and the surrounding area.⁴⁷ Soon after, the ongoing absence of the *Fusi Yama*, en route from London with a valuable cargo for Victoria merchants, prompted suggestions that the steamship had perhaps been outfitted as a privateer, based on its presence at Valparaiso, Chile in the weeks following an attack by a Confederate raider at nearby Cape Horn.⁴⁸ In response to such gossip, that summer the Bank of British Columbia, hoping to avoid the risk posed by Southern commerce raiders and privateers, began taking the precaution of obtaining certificates under seal from the colonial administration that its shipments bound for San Francisco in American vessels belonged to a British establishment

⁴⁴ Gilbert, “Rumours of Confederate Privateers Operating in Victoria,” 246.

⁴⁵ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 3.

⁴⁶ Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State, February 14, 1863,” 4.

⁴⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The U.S. Gunboat Saginaw,” 3.

⁴⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Has the ‘Fusi Yama’ Turned Privateer?” 3.

created under royal charter.⁴⁹ The *Colonist* urged readers to follow similar precautions, and asserted that “obtaining the Government certificate for property of British subjects, such as can be shipped from this port in American bottoms, will not appear at all unnecessary.”⁵⁰ At the end of the year the USS *Narragansett* arrived at Esquimalt to investigate a story published by the *Oregonian* that the steel schooner *Domatilla* was being outfitted as a privateer in Victoria.⁵¹ The United States Navy felt convinced of the need to deploy the *Narragansett*, which remained in Esquimalt until early the next year.⁵² As further evidence of the anxieties of American officials over the possibility of Confederate attacks devastating Union shipping in the Pacific, later that spring the *Narragansett* and *Saranac* were ordered to the Puget Sound area, supposedly to protect the regional lumber trade from a rumoured visit by the notorious commerce raider CSS *Alabama*, which captured 65 prizes valued at almost \$6 million during the course of the American Civil War.⁵³ The rumored arrival of the *Alabama* in the region was expected by a portion of the Southern population of Victoria, who even rented the dining room of a local hotel for the purpose of hosting officers from the vessel.⁵⁴ While the story seemed questionable to the press, the arrival of Confederate commerce raiders in British North America to take on supplies in a neutral port was not entirely without precedent during the American Civil War. Only a few months later, on 18 August 1864, the CSS *Tallahassee*, under the command of John Taylor Wood, arrived in Halifax for coal, repairs, and supplies.⁵⁵ Given the lengthy delay in news reaching the region from the American East Coast, readers in British Columbia and Vancouver

⁴⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “Privateering,” 3.

⁵⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “How Privateering Will Affect Victoria,” 2.

⁵¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “U.S. War Vessel at Esquimalt,” 3.

⁵² *Daily British Colonist*, “U.S.S. Narragansett,” 3.

⁵³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Rumor,” 3.

⁵⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “A Confederate ‘Blow Out,’” 3.

⁵⁵ Greg Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow: The Civil War and Canada’s Maritime Provinces* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), xix.

Island remained ignorant that the *Alabama* had in fact been sunk by the USS *Kearsarge* several weeks earlier, on 19 June, and would never arrive in the Pacific Northwest. Although the danger represented by rumours of Confederate plots never actually materialized, local shipping interests galvanized to meet the perceived increase in risk to coastal trading, and American consul Allen Francis and other United States officials felt compelled enough to respond to the perceived Southern threat.

While most rumours were gradually discredited, there was nevertheless legitimate cause for alarm, given that the Confederate government, desperate to maintain its fledgling bid for independence, dispatched numerous saboteurs and spies to Canada during the final period of the conflict in a bid exploit the lengthy and easy to cross border separating British North America and the Northern States, and ideally provoke war between Great Britain and the United States.⁵⁶ Confederate President Jefferson Davis sent Jacob Thompson and C.C. Clay to Canada in the spring of 1864, in the hope of capitalizing on Southern sympathies in Montreal and Toronto and organizing raids and other acts of sabotage in the North to harass the Union cause.⁵⁷ The United States government was quickly alerted to the presence of Confederate commissioners, such as Clay and Thompson, in British North America, and worried that Canada was providing a safe haven for Southern agents.⁵⁸ While incidents like the St. Albans Raid, in which a group of Southern raiders, led by Bennett H. Young, crossed the border into Vermont on 19 October 1864 and robbed several banks of American funds totalling \$208,000 in order to fund the Confederate war effort, temporarily strained relations, the Lincoln administration remained solely fixated on

⁵⁶ Adam Mayers, *Dixie and the Dominion: Canada, the Confederacy, and the War for the Union* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2003), 12, 224.

⁵⁷ Wilfrid Bovey, "Confederate Agents in Canada During the American Civil War," in *Canadian Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (1921): 46-47.

⁵⁸ Bovey, "Confederate Agents in Canada During the American Civil War," 46.

defeating the Confederacy and restoring the Union.⁵⁹ Although no such plots ever surfaced in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, gossip over Confederate activities, and in particular the colonial government's perceived inaction in effectively quelling reported threats to United States interests, risked souring relations with the region's Northern population.

Rumoured attempts to outfit Confederate privateers at Victoria also raised fears among the British Colonial Office and authorities in British Columbia and Vancouver Island concerning the repercussions of locally launched attacks on American ships for relations between Great Britain and the United States. Given that Pacific Mail Steamship Company vessels annually carried \$40 million from California to New York City via Panama, there was every reason for Confederate privateers to target Union shipping in the region, which explains the alarmed response directed towards rumours of Southern plots.⁶⁰ The Confederate States of America hoped to capture gold shipments, stop the flow of the precious metal, weaken United States credit, and potentially even hinder the buying power of the American government.⁶¹ Any attacks discovered as emanating from British Columbia and Vancouver Island posed a critical threat to relations between Great Britain and the United States, as the Lincoln administration would almost certainly lay a portion of the blame on the colonies for not intervening to prevent Southern plots from emerging in their ostensibly neutral ports. To make matters worse, in his letter to Seward of 1 October 1862, Francis argued that "with few exceptions the English residents [of Victoria] sympathize with the rebels," increasing the chance of American officials

⁵⁹ P.G. Smith, "Whether it was Bold Military Operation or a Crime, the St. Albans Raid was the Northernmost Action of the Civil War," in *Military History* 15, no. 6 (February 1999): 70.

⁶⁰ Barry M. Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971), 203.

⁶¹ Gilbert, "Rumours of Confederate Privateers Operating in Victoria," 239.

blaming the colonial government for allowing Confederate plots to develop, in the event that successful attacks were ever launched.⁶²

The Duke of Newcastle, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, addressed the reported activities of Southern agents in Victoria in a letter to Douglas written on 8 May 1863, in which he ordered Douglas to “prevent any Privateers or Vessels of War being fitted out from Vancouver Island and British Columbia for the service of either of the belligerents.”⁶³ The dramatic risk of a successful Confederate operation seriously damaging relations with the United States motivated Newcastle to contact Douglas.⁶⁴ In responding to Newcastle, Douglas revealed the similar fears of local colonial officials regarding alleged attempts to outfit Confederate privateers at Victoria for use in attacks against the merchant shipping of the United States. The anxieties of Douglas about rumours of Southern plots marring relations with the U.S. even led him to ask that Francis inform Seward of his intention to “exercise the greatest diligence to prevent the fitting out of vessels as privateers to prey upon American commerce, either in the waters of Vancouver Island or British Columbia.”⁶⁵

Douglas reported to Newcastle later that summer on the aforementioned efforts of Southern agents to purchase the English steamer *Thames* for service as a Confederate privateer.⁶⁶ Attempting to ease concerns within the British Colonial Office, Douglas notified Newcastle that

⁶² Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, October 1, 1862,” 3.

⁶³ Henry Pelham-Clinton, “Newcastle to Douglas, May 8, 1863.” Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 15, 2011).

⁶⁴ Henry Pelham-Clinton, “Newcastle to Douglas, May 8, 1863.” Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

⁶⁵ Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, June 11, 1863,” in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 1 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

⁶⁶ James Douglas, “Douglas to Newcastle, July 22, 1863.” Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 15, 2011).

the gossip surrounding the *Thames* was questionable, and that ultimately no concrete Southern plot was discovered requiring the intervention of local officials at Victoria.⁶⁷ Douglas forwarded similar information to Lord Lyons, and requested that the British envoy to the United States assure President Abraham Lincoln “that every vigilance will be used by my Government to discover and frustrate all attempts to fit out Privateers in the Ports of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, to prey on the commerce of the United States in the Pacific.”⁶⁸ Douglas hoped to assuage the fears of the Lincoln administration over the threat of Southern privateers, and to also convince the American government that local colonial officials in British Columbia and Vancouver Island were committed to halting Confederate plots that endangered the safety of Union shipping. Douglas was moved by the potential strain on relations between Great Britain and the United States that might result from rumours of Southern plots to try and contact the president directly, simply to offer a message of reassurance. The alarm generated in the British Colonial Office and among local colonial officials by the potentially disastrous impact of Southern plots on relations between Great Britain and the United States prompted swift intervention from both Newcastle and Douglas.

Towards the end of the Civil War rumours of Southern plots were still circulating in Victoria. Francis wrote to Seward on March 4th, 1865 about a recent visit to Victoria by an agent of Dr. William Gwin, a former Democratic Senator of California and Southern sympathizer, who was linked at the beginning of the conflict with a plan to have California secede from the United

⁶⁷ James Douglas, “Douglas to Newcastle, July 22, 1863.” Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

States.⁶⁹ According to Francis, Gwin's agent, named Wilson, arrived straight "from the Rebel army," and soon appeared at a meeting organized by Victoria's Confederates "to form an organization, the members of which were to emigrate to the Northern States of Mexico."⁷⁰ Over a hundred Southerners signed up for the operation, with Wilson then departing for the mainland "to raise five or six hundred men – to charter a vessel, and sail direct from the Island or some harbor on the Coast of British Columbia direct to the Coast of Mexico."⁷¹ Francis also noted Wilson's collection of large quantities of weapons and ammunition to accompany the expedition, warning Seward "already quite a number of Confederates have left this city for Mexico, via San Francisco."⁷² He again highlighted the assistance of local Northerners in supplying him with information, stressing that "Union men, good and loyal Americans, are wide awake in regard to this late movement of the Confederates on this Coast, and are furnishing me with the names of all the Rebels within their knowledge."⁷³ The plot appears to have gradually lost momentum, especially following the rejection of large-scale Southern immigration by the Mexican government, which feared the frustrated Confederate supporters were planning a filibustering expedition along the lines of Americans like William Walker, who installed himself as President of Nicaragua from 1856 to 1857. With the end of the Civil War weeks after details of Gwin's plot emerged, many Americans gradually left Victoria, now that slavery and the danger of sectional conflict both appeared to have passed in the United States.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Allen Francis, "Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, March 4, 1865," in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 1 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

⁷⁰ Francis, "Letter to Secretary of State, March 4, 1865," 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁴ Sharon Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," 124.

While rumoured attempts to outfit privateers at Victoria never materialized, the raising of rebel banners provided a symbolic means for local Southerners to demonstrate their loyalty to the Confederacy. The hoisting of Southern banners was hardly exclusive to British Columbia and Vancouver Island, since businesses in Halifax, Nova Scotia frequently flew the Confederate flag, yet its appearance in remote communities like Victoria, comparably farther away from the conflict than the Atlantic Coast of British North America, surprised and shocked residents, both of American and British origin, and is certainly worthy of further historical discussion.⁷⁵ On five separate occasions between 25 December 1863 and 20 April 1865 the *Chronicle* provided vivid reports of the Southern flags being raised in Victoria.⁷⁶ The *Colonist* also appreciated the significance of the rebel banner's local presence, and from 12 November 1862 to 25 October 1864 included three articles on the raising of Southern flags.⁷⁷ Later that year during celebrations in Victoria to commemorate the birthday of the Prince of Wales, the hoisting of a rebel flag provoked an immediate backlash by Union supporters against local colonial officials.⁷⁸ Many Americans initially hoisted Union flags to honour the 10 November festivities and eagerly participated in the occasion until the raising of a Confederate banner by Louis J. Shapard, who later opened the previously mentioned Confederate Saloon, prompted them to visit the United States Consulate in order to complain about what they considered an insult to their nation.⁷⁹ United States Consul Allen Francis, responding to the pressure of local Union supporters, decided to abstain from raising his nation's flag, indicating the serious discontent resulting from

⁷⁵ Claire Hoy, *Canadians in the Civil War* (Toronto: McArthur and Company, 2004), viii.

⁷⁶ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "A 'Union' Demonstration," December 25, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Confederate President," June 4, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Confederate Flag Stolen," October 25, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Secession Flag," October 28, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "A Reminiscence," April 20, 1865, 3.

⁷⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, "Secession Flag Question," November 12, 1862, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "Confederate Flag," May 2, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Great Union Victory," October 25, 1864, 3.

⁷⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, "Secession Flag Question," 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

the Confederate banner.⁸⁰ Francis took the matter directly to Douglas, and wrote to him explaining that although Victoria's population of United States heritage was initially hoping to participate in the occasion, "the display of flags representing States in rebellion against the constituted authority of the United States of America, will deter its citizens from participating in the ceremonies."⁸¹ Francis also expressed his bitterness by avoiding an official dinner with colonial administrators, which demonstrated the potential impact of the actions of Southern supporters and sympathizers on local relations between the American government and Great Britain.⁸² Eventually Shapard took down his flag, after which the Union banner was finally hoisted by Francis at the United States Consulate, with local Americans soon following his example, as well as Northern vessels stationed in Victoria.⁸³ Colonial Secretary William Young assured Francis in his response that the raising of the Southern banner was not a signal of British recognition of the Confederacy, and that the government of Vancouver Island only acknowledged the flags "of nations having duly accredited Representatives residing within the Colony," which only consisted of France, the Kingdom of Hawaii, and the United States of America.⁸⁴ Young noted that the colonial government was not prepared to bar foreign citizens from displaying flags of their choice, articulating to Francis that the raising of the Confederate flag was permissible, and that Douglas had no intention of barring its exhibition just to appease offended supporters of the Union cause.⁸⁵ Although the brief diplomatic confrontation between

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁸¹ Allen Francis, "Consulate of the United States of America, Victoria, V.I., November 10, 1862, to His Excellency Governor Douglas," in *British Columbia Colonial Correspondence, 1857-1872*, 1 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1940).

⁸² Winks, *The Civil War Years*, 163.

⁸³ *Daily British Colonist*, "Secession Flag Question, 2.

⁸⁴ William Alexander George Young, "Colonial Secretary's Office, Victoria, Vancouver Island, 12th November, 1862," in *British Columbia Colonial Correspondence, 1857-1872*, 2-3 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1940).

⁸⁵ William Alexander George Young, "Colonial Secretary's Office, Victoria," 3-4.

Douglas and Francis disappeared, the raising of the Confederate flag during festivities honouring the Prince of Wales set a dangerous precedent, and signalled to representatives on both sides the potential for Southern agitators in the colonies to engender ill will between Great Britain and the United States. The Confederate flag was highly symbolic, and to loyal Americans represented rebellion and treason, which helps in explaining the disturbed reactions of Union supporters at witnessing the Southern banner in Victoria.

After the initial shock of witnessing the Confederate flag, Victoria residents, including those of Northern origin, gradually appear to have become accustomed to the routine sight of the rebel banner. The following spring Shapard appeared again with his Southern flag during a procession of area firefighters, yet according to the *Colonist* “nothing occurred from its exhibition tending in any way to mar the harmony of the day.”⁸⁶ Even the flying of Southern flags over the Confederate Saloon in honour of the birthday of President of the Confederate States of America Jefferson Davis, resulted in no discernible outcry from local Union supporters.⁸⁷ Despite several cases of the rebel banner being raised without incident, Union supporters planned to steal the Southern flag from the Confederate Saloon.⁸⁸ Although the Confederate banner was typically brought down each day at sunset, on an evening later that year it remained flying all night, which tempted a party of local Northerners to seize their opportunity to steal the rebellious flag, although they were eventually discouraged from carrying out their plan.⁸⁹ The temptation of Union supporters to temporarily rid themselves of the rebel banner was ultimately too enticing to resist, and the following year the Southern flag was stolen from the

⁸⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “Confederate Flag,” 3.

⁸⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Confederate President,” 3.

⁸⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “A ‘Union’ Demonstration,” 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

roof of the Confederate Saloon.⁹⁰ The bar's owner, Shapard, wrote an outraged letter to the editor of the *Colonist* in which he sarcastically described the theft as a "great Union victory," and noted that "the cowardly rascal left behind him the rope halcyards, the only article of which he was really deserving."⁹¹ Intimating that the culprit deserved to be hanged, Shapard joked bitterly that "should his remorse for the contemptible action become intolerable, he may be accommodated with a few feet of the rope on applying at the Confederate Saloon."⁹² Shapard presumably found himself another flag, as on 20 April 1865, shortly following the surrender of General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, which marked the closing days of the American Civil War, the *Chronicle* noted the Southern banner's defiant presence over the Confederate Saloon, despite the solemn feeling evoked throughout Victoria at the recently discovered news of President Lincoln's assassination.⁹³ Even in the wake of the collapse of the Confederacy and the lasting triumph of the United States over the secession movement, the Southern banner remained a point of contention, though its days of towering above Victoria and serving as a local symbol of disloyalty to the Union cause were almost certainly numbered. The raising of Confederate flags throughout the conflict by Southern supporters and sympathizers not only frustrated Victoria's population of Northern United States origin, but also increased the potential for ill feeling between representatives of Great Britain and the United States, and even among local Americans from both sides of the conflict.

Relations between Americans of Northern and Southern origin remained tense but largely peaceful throughout the Civil War, as both groups tended to avoid socializing with each other,

⁹⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Confederate Flag Stolen," 3.

⁹¹ *Daily British Colonist*, "Great Union Victory," 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "A Reminiscence," 3.

and frequented different establishments, although isolated acts of hostility were occasionally reported by the local press of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Royal Navy officer Edmund Hope Verney noted in a letter to his father that Americans from both regions for the most part caused no problems for local authorities in Victoria, declaring that “they are very quiet and give no trouble.”⁹⁴ Higgins notes that upon the arrival of news of Confederate victories in Victoria, “the friends of the South resident here became noisily jubilant and the friends of the North correspondingly depressed.”⁹⁵ Northerners in Victoria commemorated the Union victory in the Battle of Gettysburg and reportedly broke into celebration as soon as the mail steamer *Eliza Anderson* arrived with the news.⁹⁶ In the final days of the conflict, Union supporters staged a massive celebration in honour of the recent capture of Petersburg and Richmond by United States forces.⁹⁷ According to the *Chronicle*, approximately 200 Northern residents chartered the steamer *George S. Wright* to enjoy patriotic songs and toasts, journeying towards Beacon Hill, “where the American national salute of 13 guns was fired.”⁹⁸ The *Chronicle* appreciated the absence of gloating by Northerners and remarked that “a deep feeling of gladness at the probable end of the war, and the reunion of the erring States, seemed to animate all.”⁹⁹ Despite the respect displayed towards Southern residents of Victoria during the celebration, a fight occurred on the night of the Union celebration, and was reported the following day in the *Colonist* in a piece titled “The American War in Victoria,” which treated the matter as silly entertainment.¹⁰⁰ Shapard, owner of the Confederate Saloon, fought with Captain Stratton, of Neah Bay,

⁹⁴ Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 142.

⁹⁵ Higgins, *The Mystic Spring*, 78.

⁹⁶ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “A Day of Jubilee,” July 15, 1863, 3.

⁹⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Unionist Rejoicings,” April 12, 1865, 3.

⁹⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Unionist Rejoicings,” 3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “The American War in Victoria,” April 12, 1865, 3.

Washington Territory, who was a firm supporter of the Union.¹⁰¹ The fight was instigated by Stratton apparently making an insulting remark about the Southern flag hoisted over the Confederate Saloon, which Shapard responded to with violence, although neither party was seriously injured.¹⁰² With the conclusion of the American Civil War just days away no further conflicts between Northern and Southern residents of Victoria seem to have taken place. The actions of Shapard and Stratton represented genuinely bitter feelings between Victoria's Northern and Southern population, and although violent outbursts were evidently quite rare, the potential for further hostilities was always possible during the American Civil War. The close proximity of Northerners and Southerners to each other in Victoria always threatened to erupt in violence, especially given the tension and anxiety with which both groups constantly awaited the latest news of the faraway struggle to decide the fate of the Union.

British Columbia and Vancouver Island also experienced the influx of Americans, largely from the North, traveling across the border to communities like Victoria in the hope of escaping military service. During the American Civil War the local press reported excitedly on the phenomenon of deserters, who were popularly known as skedaddlers. On four separate occasions between 14 October 1862 and 19 January 1865 the *Colonist* reported on the phenomenon of desertion.¹⁰³ The *Chronicle* also noted the presence of deserters in the region in four pieces published from 16 May 1863 to 17 April 1864.¹⁰⁴ Winks briefly mentions the presence of "occasional draft-dodgers and bounty-jumpers" in the region, but regretfully never pursues the

¹⁰¹ *Daily British Colonist*, "The American War in Victoria," 3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰³ *Daily British Colonist*, "The Maine Skedaddlers," October 14, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Word 'Skedaddle,'" December 1, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Immigration into Canada," April 8, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Desertion," January 19, 1865, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Headquarters District of Oregon, Fort Vancouver, W.T.," May 16, 1863, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Deserters," May 16, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Ingratitude," January 15, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The 'Deserters,'" April 17, 1864, 3.

issue further.¹⁰⁵ The 14 October 1862 issue of the *Colonist* featured a press clipping from the Portsmouth *Chronicle* detailing the recent exodus of many youth in New Hampshire to Prince Edward Island to evade military service.¹⁰⁶ Later that year the *Colonist* featured a letter to the editor from an “Oliver Twist” of New Westminster, British Columbia explaining the purported origin of the word skedaddler, yet no specific mention was made to the presence of deserters within the region.¹⁰⁷ The following spring the *Colonist* briefly documented the skedaddler phenomenon in Canada since the beginning of the American Civil War, contending that to date 1,942 deserters had crossed the border from United States fleeing military service, but again made no reference to the problem being of any local concern in British Columbia and Vancouver Island.¹⁰⁸ A notice from the United States Army headquarters, District of Oregon, authorized by regional commander Brigadier General Frederick Mears, appeared several months later, however, informing any skedaddlers present in British Columbia and Vancouver Island that “all deserters who will surrender themselves at any military post, or to any recruiting officer, before the 1st June, 1863” would be “restored to duty without punishment, except the forfeiture of pay and allowances during their absence,” as promised by President Lincoln’s recent amnesty proclamation.¹⁰⁹ The printing of such a notice in the Victoria press hinted at the presence of deserters in British Columbia and Vancouver Island that the United States Army hoped to entice back across the border for their fulfilment of military service. As further evidence for the problem of Americans evading military service in the region, the *Chronicle* directed readers to the United States army advertisement, and explained that the notice was sent to the editorial

¹⁰⁵ Winks, *The Civil War Years*, 161-162.

¹⁰⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Maine Skedaddlers,” 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Word ‘Skedaddle,’” 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “Immigration into Canada,” 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Headquarters District of Oregon, Fort Vancouver, W.T.,” 2.

newspaper's editorial office "as there are many of the class [deserters] in these Colonies who may wish to return to their allegiance, but who have been afraid to do so for fear of severe punishment."¹¹⁰ Incidents of deserters arriving in Victoria increased towards the end of the conflict, and were reported with greater frequency by the local press. The following spring three sailors appeared at the United States Consulate, who claimed they were destitute and were temporarily cared for by Francis.¹¹¹ When the ship *John Jay* arrived to return the sailors to military service in the United States, they simply fled, proving their intention to remain on British soil.¹¹² During the same period a group of Canadians and one American who were arrested in San Francisco for deserting the Union Army were released in Victoria after arriving on British soil.¹¹³ The group probably escaped punishment because Britain's neutral stance in the American Civil War legally prevented British subjects from serving in either the Union or Confederate forces, although many enlisted regardless, or were coerced into fighting through crimps and other means. The *Chronicle* noted that the lone American citizen present in the group was "Mr. John McCully, for six years a resident of British Columbia," which may have helped him earn treatment as a British subject and avoid stiffer penalties.¹¹⁴ Perhaps most notably, the following year seventeen American troops who arrived on the *Pacific*, refused to return to their duties after stepping ashore on British soil.¹¹⁵ The fate of the soldiers was never revealed, though the remainder of the American force was taken as planned to Steilacoom, Washington Territory.¹¹⁶ While not of major concern to the region, the experience of deserters crossing the

¹¹⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Deserters," 3.

¹¹¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Ingratitude," 3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The 'Deserters,'" 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, "Desertion," 3.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

border into British Columbia and Vancouver Island nevertheless captured the imagination and interest of local press outlets, and proved enough of a problem to prompt United States forces in the District of Oregon to encourage any skeddaddlers in Victoria to return to military service in return for an amnesty from punishment.

The presence in British Columbia and Vancouver Island of a sizeable population from both the Northern and Southern United States during a conflict as bitterly divisive and horrific as the American Civil War posed myriad challenges to the local colonial government. Americans of both Northern and Southern heritage banded together with an explicit agenda to assist the Union and Confederate war efforts, ignoring the avowed British stance of neutrality. Southern supporters and sympathizers in the region went beyond the mere collection of funds to aid the fledgling Confederacy, and not only raised flags to the consternation of local Northerners, but also planned schemes to disrupt the Union war effort, such as the outfitting of Confederate privateers in Victoria. Northerners, while not as subversive to British neutrality as their Southern neighbours, posed their own problems to the local colonial administration, by occasionally fleeing across the border to escape military service and forming their own associations to assist the embattled United States. The colonial administration enforced the neutrality laws whenever possible and tried to convince the Lincoln administration that Southern activities were being closely monitored, and that local officials would intervene if any plots ever directly threatened the Union war effort. While relations between Great Britain and the United States managed to endure throughout the conflict, and no such Southern schemes ever materialized, the actions of the American population of the region during the conflict is not without significance, and deserves further scrutiny from historians. Despite their absence from a faraway conflict involving the country of their birth, Americans of both Northern and Southern heritage mobilized

in the remote Pacific Coast of British North America to assist Union and Confederate forces, and in doing so, not only challenged the neutrality of the British government, but also raised the frightening prospect of deteriorating relations between Great Britain and the United States.

Chapter 3: “Her Majesty’s Most Loyal Subjects”: Victoria’s African-American Community during the American Civil War

By the beginning of the American Civil War, Victoria featured a notable African-American community comprised of several hundred individuals, mostly from California, who made the trip across the border to settle in the remote British Pacific colony. In this chapter, I argue that the Civil War impacted race relations in Victoria, Vancouver Island, by significantly raising tensions between African-Americans and Euro-American settlers, primarily those from the United States. Although their experiences varied considerably, and explicit hostility was not especially common, Victoria’s Blacks faced subtler forms of racial discrimination, which typically took the form of exclusion from community organizations and social functions. I assert that displays of prejudice against Victoria’s Blacks intensified considerably during the Civil War, as rising numbers of Americans from both the North and South of the United States arrived, who were frequently linked with, although certainly not entirely responsible for, racially motivated attacks. Rather than meekly accept discrimination and exclusion, Victoria’s African-American residents regularly attempted to obtain fairer treatment and defiantly battled for greater social equality. Acts of racially motivated exclusion occurred despite the evident hostility of British settlers to the institution of slavery, which was often articulated in the local press as a means of distinguishing themselves from their American neighbours. Blacks eagerly monitored progress of the American Civil War, and celebrated occasions like the formal issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, which they considered an important benchmark in the quest to abolish slavery in the United States. Victoria newspapers reacted with obvious relief as the Lincoln Administration gradually took steps to end slavery in the United States, and even expressed hope that newly

liberated slaves would enjoy greater rights and freedoms following the end of the conflict and restoration of the Union.

Prior to the onset of hostilities during the American Civil War, Victoria experienced an influx of African-American settlers from the United States, who rapidly established a prominent community within the city. Thirty-five Blacks arrived on 25 April 1858 from California, beginning a pioneer community that at its height was composed of approximately 500 to 600 members.¹ Although their precise numbers were never counted, during this period around 400 Black families probably made the journey to Victoria from California.² Discrimination played a critical role in motivating the exodus to Victoria, and the arrest of Archy Lee as a fugitive slave, despite the existence of a state ban on slavery, as well as the February 1858 decision of the San Francisco School Board to force African-American children to attend separate institutions all represented key examples of growing settler racism in California.³ Newly elected Governor John B. Weller was extremely critical of the abolition movement, and the California Legislature was even considering the passage of a bill to restrict Black immigration to the state.⁴ There was significant diversity among the African-Americans who ultimately made the decision to leave California for Victoria, as certain members of the group were ex-slaves from the South, while others were freeborn Blacks from the North.⁵ The level of education among the new arrivals varied considerably, as did their financial prosperity and ability to invest in the colonial

¹ Sharon Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," in *The Pacific Province: a History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J.M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 119.

² Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 273-274.

³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 272.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁵ Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," 119-120.

economy.⁶ Blacks were welcomed by Governor James Douglas, given his sympathetic attitude towards them for the discrimination they previously faced in California, in addition to his belief that Vancouver Island desperately needed settlers in order to consolidate British power in the region and to boost the colonial economy.⁷ Douglas eagerly sold land to these African-American pioneers, who were instructed by him that after a brief period as landholders they would be permitted to serve as jurors and vote, and eventually perhaps become British subjects.⁸ Black settlers quickly immersed themselves in the economy of Vancouver Island, opening clothing stores, barber shops, restaurants, working as lawyers, carpenters, farmers, and occasionally even venturing to the gold fields of British Columbia, or to establish homesteads on Salt Spring Island.⁹ By the beginning of the American Civil War the African-American community in Victoria boasted several hundred members, who managed to skilfully integrate themselves in a variety of professions within the economic life of Vancouver Island. Though the ability of Victoria's Blacks to easily adjust in their new setting might suggest that they were graciously accepted by the Euro-American population of Vancouver Island, in reality these African-American pioneers frequently faced a level of discrimination similar to their previous experiences in California.

Wishing to participate within the colonial community of Vancouver Island, and gain acceptance from existing Euro-American residents, Victoria's new African-American population formed their own rifle corps for the avowed purpose of helping in the defence of the colony from the United States and the region's Indigenous population. Several Blacks initially attempted to

⁶ Ibid., 119-120.

⁷ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 274-275.

⁸ Ibid., 273.

⁹ Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," 119-121.

join the local volunteer fire brigade, but the Euro-American members refused to admit them.¹⁰ As a result, in August 1859 the Blacks approached Douglas with a proposal that they form a rifle corps, which was readily accepted, given the dearth of military defences in place for the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island.¹¹ Although the extent of Euro-American interest in the volunteer militia is unknown, the Blacks, remembering their inability to join the fire brigade, barred white members from joining, aside from their eventual bandmaster.¹² Largely self-funded, with a bit of support from the colonial administration and the Hudson's Bay Company, the African-American volunteers relied primarily on entrance fees and subscriptions, and received basic weapons training and instruction from a drill sergeant aboard a vessel stationed at Esquimalt soon after their formation, while three officers from within the company were elected to lead them.¹³ In April 1860 the volunteers became known as the Pioneer Rifles, and until the summer of 1861 remained the only militia present on Vancouver Island, which demonstrates their critical importance to the protection of the colonies.¹⁴ The African-American community of Victoria, though new to the region, was already playing a significant role in the defence of Vancouver Island, but members were still struggling to fit into a colonial society controlled by the Euro-American population.

Despite their significant contribution to the protection of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, the Pioneer Rifles occasionally faced the racial animus of Euro-American settlers, as well as institutional exclusion at the hands of the region's British-dominated colonial administration, yet a few more tolerant local whites periodically rallied to their defence. In the

¹⁰ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 278.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹² *Ibid.*, 278.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 279.

summer of 1861 several Euro-American residents attempted to form their own militia, which later became known as the Victoria Volunteer Rifle Corps. Instead of the colonial government partially funding separate companies, the Pioneer Rifles assumed that their organization would simply join ranks with the new militia, and sent a delegation to a meeting of white militia members asking for permission to vote in the upcoming election of an officer to lead their unit.¹⁵ During the meeting to tremendous applause the chairman of the white volunteers declared that Blacks were barred from participating in the affairs of their company.¹⁶ The Pioneer Rifles were also prevented from participating in the welcome reception for Arthur Kennedy, who replaced Douglas in early March 1864 as Governor of Vancouver Island. Over the course of a few days in March 1864 the *Chronicle* provided extensive coverage of the dispute, publishing five pieces on the matter.¹⁷ The *Colonist* also addressed the controversy on three separate occasions during the same period.¹⁸ In a letter to the editor featured in the *Chronicle* under the pseudonym of ‘Briton’, the author attributed the exclusion of the Pioneer Rifles to the organizing committee “composed of foreigners and a few English sympathizers with foreign prejudices, striking down with one fell blow the dearest principles of British freedom,” linking racism with the local American population.¹⁹ Defending the loyalty and courage of the Black Pioneer Rifles, ‘Briton’ protested the decision to bar them from the reception, wondering “is this the way to treat men who in the day of trial will be called upon to face the iron hail of an enemy’s musketry?”²⁰ Days later a

¹⁵ Ibid., 279.

¹⁶ Ibid., 279.

¹⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Governor’s Reception and Rifle Corps,” March 5, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Reply to Briton,” March 6, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Pioneer Rifle Company and Ball Cartridges,” March 6, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Pioneer Rifle Corps Again,” March 6, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “What is Sauce for the Goose is Sauce for the Gander,” March 8, 1864, 3.

¹⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Pioneer Rifle Corps,” March 7, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Pioneer Rifles,” March 19, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Pioneer Rifle Company,” March 31, 1864, 3.

¹⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Governor’s Reception and Rifle Corps,” 3.

²⁰ Ibid., 3.

letter from a former member of the now defunct white volunteer rifles emerged in the *Colonist*, attacking the decision to exclude the Pioneer Rifles from the governor's reception, asking readers "are we going to be ruled by American firemen and a few Englishmen with American proclivities?"²¹ The writer lauded Victoria's Blacks for demonstrating their ability to organize an effective volunteer militia where the local Euro-American population had up to that point failed.²² 'One of the Committee' responded in another letter to the editor published by the *Chronicle*, labelling the allegations of racism directed at the organizers of the governor's reception as baseless.²³ The writer explained to readers that "when the proposition was made to invite the Pioneer Rifles it was decided that no military display should be made," and stressed that this was the sole reason behind the decision not to include the Black volunteers.²⁴ Though certainly plausible, the argument made by 'One of the Committee' seems dubious given that the Pioneer Rifles represented the only militia force in Victoria at the time, as there was no comparable white organization, making the pretext of not desiring a military demonstration during the reception a likely cover to mask Euro-American racism against local Blacks. Royal Navy officer Edmund Hope Verney disagreed with the notion that the decision was not intended as a slight to African-American residents, and in a letter to his father accused the committee of deliberately wording the event programme to exclude the Pioneer Rifles.²⁵ Verney wrote of his disappointment at what he described as "the narrow-mindedness that has lately showed itself," in Victoria, and blamed the discrimination directed towards Blacks on what he described as the "absurd jealousies" felt by the organizing committee towards the Pioneer Rifles for their success

²¹ *Daily British Colonist*, "The Pioneer Rifle Corps," 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Reply to Briton," 3.

²⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Reply to Briton," 3.

²⁵ Edmund Hope Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, ed. Allan Pritchard (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 193.

in forming a volunteer militia where whites had hitherto failed.²⁶ Another letter from an author utilizing the pseudonym ‘Civis’ accused the organizing committee of deliberately creating a dispute with the Pioneer Rifles, so as to discourage all of Victoria’s Blacks from participating in the occasion of welcoming the new governor.²⁷ Prior to his departure, Governor Douglas evidently sympathized with the Pioneer Rifles, but avoided directly intervening to secure them a place in the welcome reception for Kennedy.²⁸ Shortly after the debate in the local press, Superintendent of Police Horace Smith informed Captain R.H. Johnson, commander of the Pioneer Rifles, that the company was prohibited from bearing arms if they decided to appear during Kennedy’s reception.²⁹ These letters provide compelling evidence that a significant portion of Victoria’s population blamed resident Americans for the exclusion of the Black Pioneer Rifles from participating in Kennedy’s welcome reception.

Barred from appearing in any official capacity at the festivities honouring Kennedy, the Pioneer Rifles instead delivered an address to the new governor, which was given by Johnson.³⁰ After saluting Kennedy and giving thanks for his safe arrival, Johnson expressed the anger felt by the Pioneer Rifles at being excluded from the governor’s recent reception, declaring “our only regret is, that in the general rejoicing over your Excellency’s arrival, we were precluded, on account of an anti-English prejudice against our color, from the honor as well as the pleasure of taking part in the procession as a military company – a company whose highest aim is to be of service to Her Majesty, and whose greatest privilege is to be Her Majesty’s most loyal

²⁶ Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 193.

²⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “What is Sauce for the Goose is Sauce for the Gander,” 3.

²⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Pioneer Rifle Corps Again,” 3.

²⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Pioneer Rifles,” 3.

³⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Pioneer Rifle Company,” 3.

subjects.”³¹ In his reply, Kennedy offered his sincerest sympathies with the Pioneer Rifles, as well as the rest of Victoria’s African-American community, but, like his predecessor, refused to take sides in the matter and hoped that the issue would simply resolve itself.³² Kennedy also connected the poor treatment of the Pioneer Rifles with the American population, urging that such racial antagonisms were inappropriate for a community built for the adherence of British values.³³ Regardless of the sympathies expressed by Kennedy, the dispute surrounding the governor’s reception irrevocably damaged the morale of the Pioneer Rifles. Facing growing competition from the Euro-American led Victoria Volunteer Rifle Corps for government support, and unable to meet its costs, the Pioneer Rifle Corps disbanded in the spring of 1865, just as the American Civil War was coming to a close. The Pioneer Rifles fought for a respected place within the colonial society of Vancouver Island, but the racial prejudices directed towards them from Euro-American settlers proved demoralizing enough to prompt their disbandment, despite the evident support of several white residents who felt strongly enough to write favourably of them, as well as the sympathies of governors Douglas and Kennedy. The racial animus felt by the Pioneer Rifles was in no way an anomaly, and merely reflected the extensive discrimination targeted at Victoria’s African-American community during the period immediately surrounding the American Civil War.

Victoria’s Black population was routinely discriminated against by Euro-American residents and excluded from colonial economy and society during the period of the American Civil War. Victoria’s African-American community typically shared the customs, religious beliefs, and values of Euro-American neighbours, yet certain whites sought to exclude Blacks

³¹ Ibid., 3.

³² Ibid., 3.

³³ Ibid., 3.

from establishments such as bars and churches, as well as social functions.³⁴ In 1857 William F. Clarke of the Colonial Missionary Society, a wing of the English Congregational Union, opened a mission in Victoria and refused to racially segregate his new congregation.³⁵ Another minister, Matthew Macfie, arrived in 1859, and endorsed the separation of Black and white churchgoers.³⁶ A year later, in 1860, white members of Clarke's congregation circulated a petition in favour of segregation, prompting Clarke's resignation and protests from Black worshippers, who began boycotting the church.³⁷ The Colonial Missionary Society refused to endorse segregation, however, and Macfie was eventually recalled back to Great Britain in 1864, though his actions were never forgotten by Victoria's African-American residents, who regarded the episode as just another example of the brazen racism frequently displayed by pockets of the Euro-American community.³⁸ It is important to also stress that desegregation in Victoria's churches did not necessarily result in equality within such institutions. In the fall of 1861 the *Colonist* published a letter to the editor by 'Episcopalian' noting the exclusion of Black women from church sewing circles.³⁹ 'Episcopalian' also criticized the shunning of African-American worshippers to the back pews of local churches, accusing whites of enjoying a privileged status, and taking seats "as remote as possible from their Black brethren."⁴⁰ The author slammed church leaders for granting Blacks merely "the shadow of 'social equality,' while the substance is wanting," and accused preachers of being at odds with their professed principles.⁴¹ Blacks also faced opposition in gaining admittance for their children to local schools, though they eventually managed to earn

³⁴ Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," 124.

³⁵ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 280.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 281.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 281-282.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 282.

³⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, "The Negro Question – Sewing Circles and Churches," September 30, 1861, 2.

⁴⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, "The Negro Question – Sewing Circles and Churches," 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

such a right and prevented the possible segregation of Victoria classrooms.⁴² As further examples of deliberate racial exclusion, the subscription list for a new Victoria literary institute was closed soon after members of the African-American community attempted to participate, and Victoria's temperance society opted to fold rather than allow Blacks to join.⁴³ Lastly, in 1864 Blacks were even instructed that they would no longer be summoned to serve as jurors, ending one of the inaugural rights promised to them by Douglas upon arriving in the colony in 1858.⁴⁴

In addition to exclusion from community organization, Blacks in Victoria were occasionally denied service at bars, but eventually succeeded in the right to purchase liquor in any local drinking establishment. On three distinct occasions between 28 June and 5 July 1862 the *Colonist* reported on a prominent case involving the rights of African-American customers to enjoy service at local bars.⁴⁵ That summer Jacob Francis issued a complaint against the manager of the Bank Exchange Saloon for refusing to serve him a drink.⁴⁶ The case was brought forward because instead of being relegated to a portion of the establishment reserved for African-American customers, Francis was refused a drink altogether.⁴⁷ Though legal counsel for the defence and plaintiff hoped that both parties might reach an agreement, such a compromise failed to materialize, and the hearing went forward the following week.⁴⁸ The *Colonist* asserted the Francis case was not an isolated incident, and the issue of Blacks enjoying service at local

⁴² Meen, 124.

⁴³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 284.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁴⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, "Shall a Black Man Drink at a White Man's Bar?" June 28, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Shall a Colored Man Drink at a White Man's Bar?" July 4, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Vexed Question Settled," July 5, 1862, 2.

⁴⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, "Shall a Black Man Drink at a White Man's Bar?" 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, "Shall a Colored Man Drink at a White Man's Bar?" 3.

bears had generated considerable debate in recent memory.⁴⁹ The court confirmed the right of Francis and other African-Americans to receive a drink at any local bar, with the *Colonist* praising the decision in an editorial that argued “if a right that the law confers on a colored man be denied to him, a public wrong is committed against the entire public.”⁵⁰ Declaring “neither law nor British sentiment will tolerate the refusal of a glass of grog to a Black man or any other man if he be sober and civil, and tenders pay for what he asks,” the newspaper challenged discriminatory saloon managers to make their peace with the court ruling.⁵¹ Though Victoria’s African-American community had successfully earned the right to enjoy service at any local drinking establishment, the decision only arrived after years of sporadic exclusion, and could never force the offending proprietors and their white patrons to uniformly welcome Black customers.

Victoria’s African-American population also struggled for equal admittance to the Colonial Theatre during the period of the American Civil War. In November 1860 Blacks lobbied Douglas for help after the popular venue barred them from seats in the dress circle or orchestra, but the governor decided not to directly intervene in the affair.⁵² Enraged, several frustrated Black attendees insisted on their right to purchase tickets for good seats, and a riot swiftly ensued.⁵³ A year later whites attacked a group of African-Americans at the theatre, in an incident discussed on six separate occasions in the *Colonist* within a few days in September 1861.⁵⁴ According to the newspaper, during an evening performance “some person threw a

⁴⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Vexed Question Settled,” 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵² Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 283.

⁵³ Meen, “Colonial Society and Economy,” 124.

⁵⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, “Row at the Theatre,” September 26, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Concert Difficulty,” September 27, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, “Letter from an Assaultee,” September 28, 1861, 3;

package of flour on two colored men, who resented the insult by pitching into an innocent bystander, and a general row commenced, during which several persons were knocked down and trampled underfoot.”⁵⁵ The *Colonist* published a lengthy editorial condemning the attack against Blacks at the theatre, proclaiming that “in our opinion, no one can defend the particular act by which several of our colored citizens were gratuitously insulted.”⁵⁶ The *Colonist* asserted “it matters not if a man carries a Black skin or a white one under his shirt, if he has lawfully purchased a privilege to attend a concert, no one should interfere with his enjoyment.”⁵⁷ The editorial expressed regret that “a portion of our citizens have been educated not to tolerate anything approaching to social equality with the African race,” hinting that responsibility for the incident rested with the colony’s American population.⁵⁸ Following the affair, prominent Black merchant Mifflin Gibbs sent a letter to the *Colonist*, identifying himself as one of the victims of the attack, along with his wife, as well as a couple of his friends.⁵⁹ Gibbs lay guilt for the incident squarely on the shoulders of the colony’s American residents, asking readers “is not British law superior to the ‘deeply rooted prejudices’ and Yankee notions that are racking that republic from centre to circumference?”⁶⁰ Gibbs wondered why he should suffer the degradation and humiliation of being excluded from dress circle and orchestra seats, “to please a few renegade Yankees, who, if they had a spark of patriotism about them, would be fighting their country’s battles and not laying around here to save their hides and foment strife.”⁶¹ Although the letter by Gibbs wrote convincingly of the role played by residents of United States origin in

Daily British Colonist, “Miften W. Gibbs’ Letter,” September 28, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “Reply to Emil Sutro,” September 28, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Theatre Row – A Remedy,” September 28, 1861, 2.

⁵⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “Row at the Theatre,” 3.

⁵⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “Concert Difficulty,” 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “Letter from an Assaultee,” 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

the racially motivated attack at the Colonial Theatre, the *Colonist* took issue with him, contending that his connection of the incident with Americans was “in very bad taste.”⁶² The paper suggested that Gibbs “speak more justly of the twenty millions of Americans who are waging war against the rebels who wish to extend the area of slavery.”⁶³ While initially sympathetic to the Blacks in attendance at the performance, the *Colonist* shifted its tone, trivializing both the racial prejudices that motivated the attack, as well as the likely American responsibility for it. A card from an ‘Emil Sutro’ was also published by the *Colonist*, attacking local Blacks for attempting to force themselves on Victoria’s white society, and contending that the majority of Euro-Americans found them offensive.⁶⁴ A letter penned by ‘An Offended Englishwoman’ refuted Sutro’s claims, and defended the Blacks in attendance at the Colonial Theatre, arguing “they are as a class, superior to many who composed the audience on the very night in question.”⁶⁵ The author also blamed Victoria’s American population for causing trouble, accusing them of failing to adapt to British customs concerning the supposed fairer treatment of Blacks.⁶⁶ Another letter written by ‘An Englishman’, blamed the Blacks themselves for the incident, accusing them of knowing that their “presence would breed a disturbance.”⁶⁷ Instead of lamenting the inability of Victoria’s African-Americans to enjoy an evening at the theatre in peace, ‘An Englishman’ recommended that all future tickets sold explicitly state that dress circle and orchestra seats were inaccessible to Blacks.⁶⁸ Shortly after the throwing of flour on Gibbs and other Blacks at the Colonial Theatre, management of the venue temporarily backed off on the issue.

⁶² *Daily British Colonist*, “Miften W. Gibbs’ Letter,” 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, “Reply to Emil Sutro,” 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Theatre Row – A Remedy,” 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

A couple of years later another incident involving racial discrimination at the Colonial Theatre captured the attention of the local press, with the *Chronicle* reporting twice on the matter in December 1863.⁶⁹ During the affair, an African-American identified as Alexander McCarthy was ejected from the theatre and arrested after trying to force his way into the dress circle.⁷⁰ McCarthy purchased a ticket to the Colonial Theatre, but not through the venue's official agent, and was subsequently denied entry.⁷¹ During the court hearing following the incident, Mr. Ward, manager of the Colonial Theatre, defended his refusal to admit McCarthy, stating that he objected to "those persons going in who would be objectionable to the audience."⁷² The defence argued that since Blacks were not legally prohibited from the theatre, McCarthy had every right to attend the performance.⁷³ The court evidently sympathized with McCarthy, as the charge against him of creating a disturbance was quickly dropped, although he was convicted of resisting arrest, and released after payment of a parole bond.⁷⁴

Racially motivated disturbances at the Colonial Theatre only sparked further debate on the issue of African-American attendance at public and social functions. During the following autumn a group of local Blacks visited Governor Kennedy to present a petition following the announcement by the Colonial Theatre that African-Americans would again be prevented from sitting in the dress circle and orchestra.⁷⁵ The petition articulated that Victoria's African-American residents had initially been compelled to settle in the colony "under the impression that British Law recognised no distinction as to colour, and that they would enjoy all the

⁶⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Arrest," December 11, 1863, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Disturbance at the Theatre," December 12, 1863, 3.

⁷⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Arrest," 3.

⁷¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Disturbance at the Theatre," 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, "The Colored Question," October 6, 1864, 3.

privileges incident to British subjects,” and as a result rejected the theatre’s ceaseless efforts to impose racial discrimination.⁷⁶ The appeal, which was signed by several notable Black settlers, such as Jacob Francis, Edward V. Tullock, Thomas P. Freeman, William Brown, and Henry Plummer, asked for a response from Kennedy.⁷⁷ Acting Colonial Secretary Henry Wakeford replied on behalf of the governor, and while sympathetic of the protests of local African-Americans to the injustice of racial exclusion, Kennedy refused to take any concrete action to reverse the policy of the Colonial Theatre.⁷⁸

Following delivery of the petition to Kennedy, several letters appeared in Victoria newspapers advocating the equal admittance of Blacks to public performances and social occasions, although a few dissenting voices spoke out in favour of the right of business owners to exclude customers they preferred not to serve, even on the basis of ethnicity. Within the span of a few days the *Chronicle* published three letters on the rights of Blacks to attend the theatre, indicating the importance which local residents attached to the matter.⁷⁹ A letter to the editor published in the *Chronicle* by ‘Monitor’ justified racial exclusion, provided such policies were clearly laid out by local businesses, contending it was perfectly reasonable for the manager of an establishment like the Colonial Theatre “to use his discretion as to whom he will sell tickets, and if such tickets shall be transferrable.”⁸⁰ Rather than a moral affront to the ability of African-American citizens to enjoy social occasions such as the theatre on an equal basis as their Euro-American neighbours, the exclusion of Blacks was considered a defining right of business

⁷⁶ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Colored Question,” October 8, 1864, 3.

⁷⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Colored Question,” 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Colored Question,” October 6, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Colored Question,” October 7, 1864, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Theatre: British Born Subjects Excluded,” October 8, 1864, 3.

⁸⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Colored Question,” 3.

owners. A writer under the pseudonym of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ vehemently disagreed with the sentiments of ‘Monitor’, and preferred the permanent closure of the Colonial Theatre to the maintenance of the venue “at the sacrifice of a great principle – that of perfect civil and social equality for all classes of the people, irrespective of creed, caste or color.”⁸¹ The letter stressed that “all the trouble that has arisen on this ‘colored question’ has been the work of roughs and rowdies of the city – men who left their country for their country’s good,” alluding to the supposed role of Victoria’s residents of United States heritage in furthering racial prejudice, though the author noted that these discriminatory attitudes were not solely the responsibility of the American population, and were being kept alive by Britons with similar sentiments.⁸² Another letter penned by ‘F.F.D.’ also attributed the poor treatment of the colony’s Black community on residents originally from the United States, accusing them of “trying their utmost to subvert our customs and introduce their pernicious ‘prejudices’” to Vancouver Island.⁸³ Invoking the involvement of African-American soldiers in the ongoing Civil War, ‘F.F.D.’ asserted “the American people amongst us should bear in mind that the colored men are fighting their battles valiantly, the battles of the white man side by side they fight.”⁸⁴ The *Colonist* published a letter on 7 October by a writer referred to as ‘Violet’, which criticized the linkage of residents originally from the United States to discrimination against Victoria’s Black population, and regarded such racist sentiments as the result of Britons becoming “so bound up with Americans as neighbors and friends that they must even adopt their ignoble prejudices.”⁸⁵ ‘Violet’ argued that since the United States government was changing its relationship with

⁸¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Colored Question,” 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Theatre: British Born Subjects Excluded,” 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Unworthy Prejudice,” October 7, 1864, 3.

African-Americans as a consequence of the Civil War, the constant connection between racism and the American population of Victoria was no longer justified.⁸⁶ ‘Violet’ asserted that Victoria’s Britons were eager to blame inhabitants from the United States for the discriminatory treatment of Blacks in order to “palm off every exhibition of their innate meanness in the way of excluding colored people from public banquets, balls, concerts, theatres, etc., as the irresistible influence of corrupt American *sentiment*.”⁸⁷ The letters published in both major Victoria newspapers almost uniformly condemned the decision of the manager of the Colonial Theatre to bar Blacks from purchasing tickets for certain seats at the venue, and continued to link such discrimination attitudes with the American population.

Although newspapers frequently linked acts of discrimination with local Americans, the actual extent to which racial prejudices against Victoria’s African-American community during the Civil War were perpetrated by Euro-Americans originally from the United States is difficult to gauge. Racial tensions in Victoria were exacerbated during the conflict by the increasing presence of Americans, especially from the South, many of whom were fleeing to escape the Civil War.⁸⁸ The most explicit forms of prejudice were regularly linked with the American population, but the British-dominated colonial administration demonstrated a more subtle form of racism designed to systematically exclude African-Americans and other non-white ethnic groups, such as the Chinese and Indigenous peoples, from formal ceremonies and private social occasions, as well as positions of power within the government.⁸⁹ As examples of such subtle forms of racial exclusion perpetrated by the colonial government, Victoria’s Blacks were

⁸⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Unworthy Prejudice,” 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁸ Winks, *The Blacks in Victoria*, 280.

⁸⁹ Meen, “Colonial Society and Economy,” 120, 124.

excluded from Queen Victoria's 1863 birthday ball and the farewell banquet for Douglas.⁹⁰ In the previously discussed welcome reception for Kennedy, the Pioneer Rifles were prevented from participating on the basis that the organizers desired that no military display accompany the festivities, yet the possibility remains for such a pretext to have served as a convenient mask to hide the latent racism of committee members. Although often just as prejudiced as their neighbours from the United States, Victoria's Britons rejected the more direct racism of Americans, and considered outright hostility vulgar to British modesty.⁹¹ The granting of the franchise to Blacks should not obscure their exclusion from numerous community organizations, and other, more difficult to trace acts of discrimination.⁹² In all likelihood both explicit and subtle forms of racial discrimination were routinely on display in Vancouver Island during the Civil War, making the linkage of the American population with the exclusion of Blacks somewhat misleading.

Even Blacks in the United States noticed the alarming racial prejudice faced by Victoria's African-American community. The *Colonist* published an article on 25 February 1864 originally printed in the *Pacific Appeal*, a newspaper serving San Francisco's African-American population, where many of Victoria's Blacks originally resided prior to departing for Vancouver Island.⁹³ The feature suggested that, rather than the British colony of Vancouver Island providing a refuge for Blacks from the pervasive racism of the United States, there was "just as much prejudice and nearly as much segregation in Victoria as in San Francisco."⁹⁴ The author acknowledged the policy of desegregation in Victoria churches and schools, but stressed that in

⁹⁰ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 284.

⁹¹ Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," 124.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹³ *Daily British Colonist*, "Victoria, V.I. Described by a Colored Man," February 25, 1864, 3.

⁹⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, "Victoria, V.I. Described by a Colored Man," 3.

both cases local Blacks battled tirelessly to achieve their rights, and that integration in these institutions was only “grudgingly and unwillingly awarded.”⁹⁵ Describing a visit to the controversial Colonial Theatre, the writer brought attention to an attempt to exclude him based on his ethnicity, remarking “when I said I wanted box tickets, the man hesitated, and said he believed the boxes were full, but as I insisted, he gave me them, and we found very eligible seats.”⁹⁶ Making the case that business owners originally from the United States were primarily responsible for the exclusion of Blacks from area bars, hotels, and restaurants, the author contended that “such places are invariably kept by Americans.”⁹⁷ The author described the supposed absence of such obvious racial prejudice at establishments run by Britons, but conceded the presence in Victoria of “many Englishmen who are as full of prejudice as the lowest secesh American amongst them.”⁹⁸ Predicting the possible end of the Civil War and slavery, the piece concluded by promising African-American readers that “we have brighter prospects of political elevation under our own government than in any British colony on this coast.”⁹⁹ While detailing the slightly improved political and social prospects of Victoria’s African-American residents compared to their counterparts in American cities like San Francisco, Blacks in the United States noticed the frequently hostile displays of racism on Vancouver Island. Certain Blacks blamed the most explicit forms of racial discrimination and exclusion on Victoria’s American inhabitants, many of whom were originally from the South, yet tellingly preferred their prospects in the aftermath of the Civil War in the United States than in the remote British colony.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 3.

Victoria's African-American population persevered throughout the Civil War, despite facing increasingly hostile displays of racial discrimination, and frequently celebrated anniversaries marking the emancipation of slaves. On seven separate occasions from 2 August 1861 to 2 January 1865 the *Colonist* described Black celebrations in Victoria to commemorate significant moments in the history of abolitionism.¹⁰⁰ The *Chronicle* also reported on African-American festivities during such occasions, and included two reports on the subject between 25 December 1863 and 3 January 1864.¹⁰¹ Almost 200 African-Americans gathered for a picnic at Cadboro Bay on 1 August 1861 to commemorate the anniversary of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, which outlawed slavery throughout the British Empire.¹⁰² According to the *Colonist*, "all enjoyed themselves amazingly," making the event a thorough success, with guests continuing to celebrate the occasion later that evening at a ball hosted by the hall of the African Rifles.¹⁰³ The following year Blacks honoured the abolition of slavery in the British Empire with a picnic to nearby Elk Lake.¹⁰⁴ Later on in the conflict, Victoria's Black community shifted its focus away from the 1 August celebrations of the Slavery Abolition Act to instead mark the anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's 1 January 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which liberated slaves in the Confederate States of America as they came under Union military occupation. Within a few weeks of the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, Victoria's Blacks staged an elaborate event to commemorate an occasion that they clearly considered of immense historical

¹⁰⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation Day," August 2, 1861, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation Day," August 2, 1862, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Jubilee Celebration," January 16, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Too Bad," January 17, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Late Jubilee," January 21, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation," December 29, 1863, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation Dinner," January 2, 1865, 3.

¹⁰¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Emancipation Day," December 25, 1863, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Emancipation Celebration," January 3, 1864, 3.

¹⁰² *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation Day," 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation Day," 3.

importance. During the celebration in early 1863, approximately 200 Blacks gathered on Beacon Hill to fire a salute of 50 guns in honour of Lincoln and 33 for the United States, before several leading figures of the African-American community, such as Willis Bond and William Brown, gave speeches to mark the event.¹⁰⁵ Following the rifle salute and addresses, the participants marched back into Victoria and the affair concluded with a ball at the Pioneer Rifle Company rooms on View Street.¹⁰⁶ The next year Victoria's Black population again celebrated the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, as organizers of the 1864 commemoration planned a dinner at Pioneer Hall, indicating that Victoria's African-American inhabitants recognized the significance of the document and wished to honour its importance for the United States of America, their country of origin.¹⁰⁷ The *Colonist* acknowledged the potential for celebrations among Victoria's African-American community of the Emancipation Proclamation to rapidly eclipse those honouring the formerly prominent Slavery Abolition Act, asserting "wisely, and with true patriotic feeling, they consider that no event of greater importance in the history of their race has ever transpired."¹⁰⁸ The dinner was ultimately well attended and an immense success, with revellers enjoying dancing and music until early the next morning.¹⁰⁹ In early 1865 the local Black community celebrated the Emancipation Proclamation with an anniversary dinner at the Pioneer Rifle Hall, offering further evidence that Victoria's African-American residents were continuing to honour important milestones in the history of abolitionism and were now giving greater importance to an anniversary that marked the initial

¹⁰⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, "Jubilee Celebration," 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Emancipation Day," 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation," 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Emancipation Celebration," 3.

steps in the dissolution of slavery in the United States, their country of origin, rather than the British Empire.¹¹⁰

Victoria newspapers consistently demonstrated their disdain for the institution of slavery, and reacted with considerable relief as the United States government gradually adopted the ending of African bondage in the South as a fundamental goal of the Civil War and restoration of the Union. On eleven separate occasions between 29 November 1860 and 18 March 1865 the *Colonist* published prominent editorials expressing support for abolition as a central war aim.¹¹¹ The *Chronicle* also reported regularly on the progress of ending slavery during the Civil War, in four notable pieces featured from 2 May 1863 to 28 December 1864.¹¹² The *Colonist* eagerly reported news of Abraham Lincoln's election as President of the United States in the 1860 election, which took place just prior to the secession crisis and eventual Civil War.¹¹³ In electing Lincoln, who was committed to halting the extension of slavery in the United States, the *Colonist* stressed that his Northern supporters had reached a critical benchmark in the eradication of "a last relic of barbarism."¹¹⁴ The following year, with the Northern war effort stalled, and no clear sign of victory in sight, the *Colonist* bemoaned the Lincoln administration's avoidance of tackling the issue of slavery, asserting "emancipation may yet loom up in the struggle as the only

¹¹⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, "Emancipation Dinner," 3.

¹¹¹ *Daily British Colonist*, "The United States Presidential Election," November 29, 1860, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "President Lincoln's Message," December 20, 1861, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The News from the States," September 10, 1862, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "States News," October 8, 1862, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "States News," December 31, 1862, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The News," January 15, 1863, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "United States Emancipation Policy," February 13, 1864, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Election of Lincoln," November 16, 1864, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Freedmen's Relief Association," November 22, 1864, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "The President's Message," December 17, 1864, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Last Days of Slavery," March 18, 1865, 2.

¹¹² *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Slavery and the War," May 2, 1863, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The President and Emancipation," June 25, 1863, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Freedmen's Association," November 22, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Freedman's Association Meeting," November 29, 1864, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The News," December 28, 1864, 2.

¹¹³ *Daily British Colonist*, "The United States Presidential Election," 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

means to preserve the Union.”¹¹⁵ Anticipating Union plans to hinge the conflict on the fate of the millions of slaves currently driving the Southern economy, the *Colonist* later predicted that “when the war is made a question of freedom or slavery, and no compromise, there is nothing to prevent the conquest of the South except the want of generalship in the North.”¹¹⁶ As news arrived that fall concerning Lincoln’s intention of issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, the newspaper expressed hope that the North was at last emphasizing the end of slavery as a potential war aim, at least in the rebelling Southern states, where the vast majority of slaves were held.¹¹⁷ The *Colonist* referred to the forthcoming Emancipation Proclamation as not the work of humanity, but rather “the command of God.”¹¹⁸ With the formal issue of the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863, the *Colonist* considered the document “a great step towards the elevation of the African race.”¹¹⁹ Later that spring the *Chronicle* argued that even if the South managed to secure its independence, slavery itself was no longer sustainable, given that repressed African-Americans would constantly seek a means of escaping bondage.¹²⁰ The *Chronicle* hailed the American government’s increased lobbying for the liberation of slaves, particularly since President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.¹²¹ The *Colonist* reacted warmly to word of Lincoln’s recent re-election, and hoped that the South would come to terms, realizing the tenacity of the North’s will to emerge victorious, as well as the impending demise of slavery.¹²² As the embattled Confederate government neared defeat, the *Chronicle* addressed the imminent demise of African bondage, celebrating that “the war was begun for the

¹¹⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “President Lincoln’s Message,” 2.

¹¹⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News from the States,” 2.

¹¹⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “States News,” 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” 2.

¹²⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Slavery and the War,” 2.

¹²¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The President and Emancipation,” 2.

¹²² *Daily British Colonist*, “The Election of Lincoln,” 2.

maintenance and extension of slavery, but providence is destined so to overrule the affairs of men that ere this mighty conflict terminates liberty will be proclaimed to the captive and the oppressed shall be set free.”¹²³ As the Civil War finally drew to a close in the spring of 1865, the *Colonist* welcomed passage of the Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery in the United States, declaring to readers that “the disgrace and wrong and infamy of two centuries are now willed out, and the flag of the United States is no longer stained with the blood of the lashed victims of oppression.”¹²⁴

With the end of the conflict within sight, thoughts turned to the plight of recently emancipated Blacks, as evidenced by a visit in late 1864 by Reverend Briggs of the Freedmen’s Association, which sought to provide aid and education to former slaves.¹²⁵ The *Chronicle* praised the charity and expressed hope that Reverend O.W. Briggs would collect significant donations while in Victoria.¹²⁶ The *Colonist* similarly lauded the charity, stating “the work of the Association is one of humanity, and appeals to men of every class, opinion and nationality.”¹²⁷ The Congregational Church hosted a meeting that November of the Freedmen’s Association, which was attended by members of Victoria’s African-American community, as well as a few prominent Euro-Americans, such as United States Consul Allen Francis, indicating that the welfare of former slaves was not just an issue of importance for local Blacks.¹²⁸ The passionate speech delivered by Reverend Briggs was regularly interrupted by applause, and approximately \$228 was immediately raised for the charity, a portion of which was donated by whites in attendance, providing further evidence that Blacks were not the only residents of Victoria closely

¹²³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The News,” 2.

¹²⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Last Days of Slavery,” 2.

¹²⁵ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Freedmen’s Association,” 3.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Freedmen’s Relief Association,” 3.

¹²⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Freedman’s Association Meeting,” 3.

monitoring the progress of the Civil War and emancipation in the United States.¹²⁹ Certain local Euro-Americans, although perhaps not advocates of complete racial equality, were also wishing to make a positive impact on the lives of newly freed African-Americans. Despite the persistent difficulties faced by local Blacks in gaining any semblance of acceptance in the colonial society and economy of Vancouver Island, Victoria newspapers expressed jubilation at the ultimate triumph of abolitionism in the United States, as well as hope that African-Americans would enjoy a less oppressive status in the future society created under the post-war peace.

With the conclusion of the Civil War, many of Victoria's Blacks soon returned to the United States, encouraged by the end of slavery in the United States and prospect of civil and political rights during the Reconstruction Era. Though the desire to rebuild former communities and return to their country of origin clearly played a critical role in motivating the departure of a notable share of Victoria's African-American residents, the significance of racially based discrimination and exclusion as a factor in their decision simply cannot be ignored by historians. Many white Americans of both Northern and Southern origin also departed, and explicit racial tension appeared to gradually decline.¹³⁰ A few Blacks remained, such as successful merchant Mifflin Gibbs, who managed to gain election to Victoria City Council in 1866 and 1868, chaired the city's finance committee, and even briefly served as acting mayor, but even he eventually went back to the United States, leaving a colony that by 1870 was almost entirely dominated by whites.¹³¹ Rather than an idyllic settler society free of prejudice, the Colony of Vancouver Island displayed forms of racism that were in many ways comparable to certain parts of the United States, and Victoria's African-American community regularly felt excluded from community

¹²⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁰ Meen, "Colonial Society and Economy," 123.

¹³¹ Ibid., 124, 127.

organizations and social occasions. While American expatriates were frequently linked with the most explicit demonstrations of racial hostility, the British-dominated colonial society and economy nevertheless functioned to prevent Blacks from enjoying either an official place in government or a respected role in ceremonial functions. In spite of the imposing racial barriers evident within the society and economy of Vancouver Island, Victoria's Blacks still managed to work in a diverse range of industries and professions during the brief period in which they resided in the colony in sizeable numbers. Victoria's African-American community also fought stubbornly to protect the rights of Blacks from the racial prejudices of Euro-American settlers, and often earned the vocal support of sympathetic whites. African-American residents monitored the progress of the American Civil War with great interest, and publicly marked occasions like the publication of the Emancipation Proclamation as defining moments for both themselves and Blacks around the world. Many settlers of British heritage similarly loathed the persistence of slavery in the United States, and reacted excitedly to news that the end of the conflict and restoration of the Union appeared to promise the liberation of slaves. The negative treatment of slavery in Victoria newspapers hardly signified any widespread support of social equality for local Blacks, however, and instead appears to have merely reflected hostility to an institution that was considered antiquated and barbarous, as well as an inhuman stain on the supposed liberty represented by the United States Constitution and democratic government. As the United States emerging from the carnage of the Civil War seemed to at last fulfill the dream of equality originally promised in the Declaration of Independence, Victoria's Blacks, disillusioned with their poor treatment on British soil, felt compelled to give their country of birth another chance.

Chapter 4: “Liberty Knows no Nationality”: Rising Solidarity with the United States in British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the American Civil War

As the American Civil War commenced, Britons in British Columbia and Vancouver Island followed the fighting from afar with eager anticipation, speculating about the precise causes behind the hostilities, as well as its enduring ramifications for the United States. Although British subjects undoubtedly scrutinized American culture and political life prior to the outbreak of sectional conflict between North and South, the Civil War offered a unique lens with which to observe events in the United States, as local newspapers debated whether or not the Union could possibly survive the horror and turmoil of such agonizing internal strife. The act of Britons observing the American Civil War revealed much about colonial society in British North America, including British Columbia and Vancouver Island.¹ The Civil War exposed not just the fundamental schism between North and South in American cultural and political life, but also the manner in which Britons in the region thought about the United States. In this chapter I argue that Britons in British Columbia and Vancouver Island demonstrated their solidarity and sympathy with the Union cause throughout the Civil War, particularly as the abolition of slavery became a clear war aim of the Lincoln administration. Local Britons joined in celebrating the Fourth of July and mourning the assassination of Abraham Lincoln by drawing on their similar cultural, political, and religious origins as a means of expressing solidarity with local Americans. British subjects in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, appreciative of the apparent stability within their own country, also expressed intense relief as the Civil War gradually ended, and deeply admired the determination of the United States to restore the Union and endure beyond

¹ Greg Marquis, *in Armageddon's Shadow: The Civil War and Canada's Maritime Provinces* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), xv.

such a tumultuous chapter in its national history. The Civil War profoundly changed the attitudes and views of Britons towards the United States and its republican democracy, which was previously considered inherently dangerous and unstable.

The Fourth of July holiday served as a chance for Britons in British Columbia and Vancouver Island to reflect on their envisioned shared past with the United States, as well as their often similar cultural, political, and religious leanings. Relations between local Britons and Americans were typically friendly throughout the conflict, as evidenced by newspaper clippings of public celebrations during the period that brought out inhabitants from both Great Britain and the United States.² During the summer of 1863 the *Victoria Daily Chronicle* featured a lengthy editorial on the subject of Independence Day in the United States and the founding in 1776 “of one of the greatest nations of the world.”³ The *Chronicle* emphasized the shared heritage of Great Britain and the United States, particularly prior to the Revolutionary War, as well as the similarities in political and religious culture enjoyed by both countries, declaring that “Americans and English stand alone at the head of all nations, identical in blood, in freedom, in laws, in literature, and religion.”⁴ Though sympathetic to the current plight of the North, and arguing that “all enmity and bitterness engendered by former wars has long since died in England,” the newspaper criticized the stubborn character of the Union government in refusing to accept the independence of the Confederacy.⁵ The *Chronicle* drew parallels between the Revolutionary War and the present sectional conflict, proclaiming that “no people born and bred to freedom can be ruled against their will,” implying that the United States needed to concede

² Robin W. Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 155.

³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1863, 2.

⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Declaration of Independence,” 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

defeat in its war against the South, much like Great Britain eventually yielded to the American bid for independence.⁶ For the *Chronicle*, the obsessive “war spirit” of the North revealed the immaturity of American democracy compared to the wise constitutional monarchy of Great Britain, which distinguished British subjects from their American friends and neighbours.⁷ The *Chronicle* predicted that any prolongation of hostilities would only further weaken the North, perhaps to the point of collapse, and made the case that the “preservation” of the United States in any form, even without the South, was ultimately far more desirable and realistic than the forced restoration of the Union.⁸

The following year the *Daily British Colonist* also featured an extended piece on the Independence Day holiday, which discussed the manner in which Americans and Britons, though separated by the Revolutionary War, continued to inspire each other through their mutual appreciation for freedom and abhorrence of tyranny.⁹ Asserting that “liberty knows no nationality,” the *Colonist* argued that Britons took an active interest in the Fourth of July, rejoicing from the lessons learned in both Great Britain and the United States by the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, which taught them that colonists in any setting were justified in rebelling against the arbitrary rule of tyrants.¹⁰ Despite the costly and ongoing Civil War, the *Colonist* predicted that the Union would endure, since “the germ of liberty is too deeply rooted on the American continent to be swept away by the present devastation.”¹¹ The *Colonist* urged that in the interests of all supporters of liberty, including Britons, the North needed to

⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Fourth of July,” July 4, 1864, 2.

¹⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Fourth of July,” 2.

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

ultimately prevail.¹² For the newspaper, the success of the North represented “the greatest guarantee for the progression of liberal opinions throughout the world,” while the establishment of Southern independence would mark a severe setback in bringing basic freedom to all peoples.¹³ Firmly conveying solidarity with the Union cause, the *Colonist* expressed hope for the abolition of slavery and the reunification of the United States.¹⁴ In strongly sympathizing with the Union cause, the *Colonist* demonstrated the solidarity of many Britons in Victoria towards their American friends and neighbours.

Immediately prior to the Civil War Victoria newspapers made no reference to local celebrations of the Fourth of July holiday in which Britons actively participated. The *Colonist* of 6 July 1859 included no information regarding local festivities to honour American Independence Day.¹⁵ According to the newspaper, the steamer *Eliza Anderson* journeyed to Port Townsend, Washington Territory with around a hundred guests to celebrate the holiday, and was saluted by the revenue cutter *Jefferson Davis* upon their arrival, yet the brief report featured no description of the exact nationality of the revellers.¹⁶ Even if a significant portion of the excursionists were of British origin, the absence of any celebrations in Victoria to mark the Fourth of July is significant, and provides evidence that the Civil War helped in eventually making the holiday more important for the colonies, by allowing local Britons the chance to demonstrate their solidarity with their American friends and neighbours in a time of great national crisis for the United States.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July Excursion,” July 6, 1859, 2.

¹⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July Excursion,” 2.

The following year the *Colonist* reported on local celebrations in Victoria to honour Independence Day in the United States, but portrayed the group of revellers as being almost entirely composed of Americans.¹⁷ According to the *Colonist* “the 84th anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence was celebrated with much spirit by our American residents.”¹⁸ The newspaper noted that “all of the American business houses were closed,” to mark the occasion, while many British establishments appear to have remained open, indicating that residents of United States origin played the most prominent role in the festivities.¹⁹ Commenting on the use of fireworks by local Americans on the Fourth of July, the *Colonist* declared “the representatives of Young America were not slow in taking advantage of the opportunity to display their patriotism.”²⁰ These comments framed the Fourth of July as a distinctly American holiday. Britons avoided active participation in the festivities, preferring to watch the celebrations from a distance, although that attitude soon changed with the commencement of fighting in the United States.

During the Civil War British subjects in British Columbia and Vancouver Island increasingly participated in American events and holidays, such as the Fourth of July, as a way of showing their solidarity with American friends and neighbours. The *Colonist* discussed the 1861 celebration of the Fourth of July in Victoria as a more general celebration than in previous years, asserting “the holiday was universal, and even affected the members of our House of Assembly, who failed to make a quorum for the transaction of business.”²¹ Discussing the eager participation of Britons in the Independence Day proceedings, the article remarked “British

¹⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July,” July 5, 1860, 2.

¹⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July,” 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July,” July 5, 1861, 3.

subjects joined with their American cousins in the celebration as heartily as if yesterday had been the birthday of our glorious Queen, and a spirit of fraternization never before seen here exhibited itself on many occasions and in different ways.”²² Patriotic Americans also fired salutes from Beacon Hill throughout the day, and according to the newspaper “the stars and stripes waved in every direction, and Union neck-ties and rosettes were as plentiful as people.”²³ As further testimony to the vigour with which local Americans and Britons honoured the occasion, the *Colonist* declared “we doubt if at any American town on Puget Sound or in Oregon the day passed more pleasantly or was more enthusiastically celebrated.”²⁴

During the following year as residents of the Puget Sound area prepared to mark the upcoming Fourth of July holiday, they extended an invitation through the Victoria press to both Americans and Britons in the colonies, and booked the steamer *Eliza Anderson* to bring passengers from Victoria to Olympia, Washington Territory.²⁵ No account of the trip appeared in Victoria newspapers, but Independence Day was again boisterously celebrated in the city, and featured the firing of national salutes from Beacon Hill, as well as the display of United States flags by both Americans and Britons.²⁶

During the next year’s festivities the *Chronicle* reported that Independence Day was celebrated in Victoria “in a quiet and unostentatious manner by the American residents and their sympathizers,” indicating that certain British subjects again commemorated the holiday alongside their Northern neighbours.²⁷ Many business owners, regardless of nationality, kept

²² *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July,” 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁵ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July Celebration,” June 25, 1862, 3.

²⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “Fourth of July,” July 5, 1862, 3.

²⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Fourth of July,” July 5, 1863, 3.

their shops closed throughout the day, and raised the American flag in honour of the United States.²⁸ Local inhabitants also celebrated Independence Day with picnic excursions to Beacon Hill and other nearby retreats, emptying livery stables of horses and buggies in the process, which provided further evidence of the extent to which the holiday was eagerly enjoyed by many residents, regardless of their nationality.²⁹ According to the *Colonist*, as the day progressed “a vehicle, a horse, or a boat could not be had for love or money.”³⁰ In a letter to his father, Royal Navy officer Edmund Hope Verney, who commanded the gunboat HMS *Grappler* in the region from 1862 to 1865, noted that the Fourth of July was a “rather wet evening for the fireworks,” which may explain the slightly less boisterous celebrations compared to previous years.³¹

Victoria newspapers noticed an apparent lack of enthusiasm for the American holiday on the mainland that year, asserting that no banners, Confederate or Union, were raised in New Westminster on the Fourth of July, which the *British Columbian* firmly denied while admitting that “there was no public celebration upon that day.”³² The *British Columbian* considered the lack of a public celebration as fitting since the colony was not part of the United States.³³ The letters of Verney to his father offer an intriguing explanation for the absence of festivities in British Columbia to honour American Independence Day, for he describes his perception of the clear differences between the colonies, arguing that “New Westminster is thoroughly English, Victoria is half-American.”³⁴ He elaborated in another letter by detailing that, in stark contrast to Victoria, New Westminster featured “more English feeling, more English Sabbath-observance,

²⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Fourth of July,” 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰ *Daily British Colonist*. “Fourth of July,” 3.

³¹ Edmund Hope Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, ed. Allan Pritchard (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 145.

³² *British Columbian*, “The 4th. Of July,” July 11, 1863, 3.

³³ *British Columbian*, “The 4th. Of July,” 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

and less American democracy and equality.”³⁵ Verney’s judgments provide an interesting, albeit general, take on the attitudes and views separating British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

According to Verney, Victoria was much more prone to American influence, while New Westminster preferred to retain its predominantly British culture. The less notable influence of American attitudes and views in New Westminster helps to explain the lack of interest granted to the Fourth of July holiday by local Britons in the mainland colony.

The following year Independence Day was again observed as a general holiday by both local Americans and Britons.³⁶ The mutual solidarity evident between both groups was on full display, with the *Colonist* noting that Britons throughout Victoria raised flags, “out of compliment to our American fellow-townsmen, who never fail to do full honor to our national holidays.”³⁷ The gesture of British subjects hoisting banners in honour of Independence Day conveyed respect to residents from the United States, but the flags they raised were Union Jacks, not the stars and stripes, which symbolized an appreciation for the holiday while preserving the ‘Britishness’ of those Britons who opted to participate in the festivities. Victoria’s inhabitants also enjoyed the usual daytrips and excursions during the Fourth of July, with revellers flocking to nearby beaches and parks.³⁸ According to the *Colonist*, the holiday offered proof of “the thorough amity and good feeling which prevail between us and our American cousins,” and demonstrated the pleasant relations between local Americans and Britons.³⁹

In New Westminster, the *British Columbian* commented that Independence Day that year was marked “with the usual spirit by the few resident Americans,” downplaying the involvement

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Fourth,” July 5, 1864, 3.

³⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Fourth,” 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

of British subjects.⁴⁰ Local Americans lit fireworks, decorated the steamer *Lillooet* in the red, white, and blue of the Star-Spangled Banner, and fired salutes at regular intervals.⁴¹ According to the newspaper the party continued until the next day, when “our courteous cousins ran up and saluted the British flag,” in a gesture of solidarity.⁴² The Fourth of July presented an opportunity for colonists of both Americans and Britons to honour their shared heritage and perceived similarities in government and religion, while acknowledging the separation of nationality between both countries dating back to the Revolutionary War.

The *Chronicle* of 7 July also discussed the celebration of Independence Day in Olympia, Washington Territory, where Governor William Pickering and former mayor Elwood Evans were joined by a group of thirty passengers from Victoria, including United States Consul Allen Francis, who made the trip on the steamer *Eliza Anderson*.⁴³ The article reported that the Britons present for the excursion “speak very highly of the hospitable reception with which they met at that town, and of the manner in which the eighty-eighth Anniversary of American Independence was observed.”⁴⁴ As further testimony to the “kind attentions” paid to the contingent of Victoria excursionists, the American revellers in Olympia met the departure of the *Eliza Anderson* with “the booming of cannon and the cheering of the assembled multitude.”⁴⁵ Britons impressively made the trip despite the lengthy distance of over a hundred miles between Olympia and Victoria, which offered evidence of their respect for the American holiday and fondness for their friends across the border. Americans and their British neighbours gathered in the capital of Washington Territory to celebrate the Fourth of July together, in a display of regional solidarity

⁴⁰ *British Columbian*, “The Fourth of July in New Westminster,” July 6, 1864, 3.

⁴¹ *British Columbian*, “The Fourth of July in New Westminster,” 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Fourth of July at Olympia,” July 7, 1864, 3.

⁴⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Fourth of July at Olympia,” 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

made all the more meaningful by the shadow of the Civil War, and the ongoing struggle of the United States to suppress the Confederacy.

Britons and Americans in the colonies also fraternized during other social occasions during the Civil War. In the summer of 1863 Victoria residents chartered the steamer *Enterprise* for a visit to the United States Army garrison on nearby San Juan Island, which was currently disputed territory and under joint occupation by both the British and American governments.⁴⁶ According to the local press, the *Enterprise* made the journey at full capacity with 160 guests, who were met warmly by the American garrison on San Juan Island, with the revellers dancing and singing until the moment the steamer returned to Victoria.⁴⁷ The *Chronicle* expressed appreciation of what it described as “the courtesy and attention shown by the American officers and soldiers to their John Bull cousins,” which displayed the fraternization frequently evident among American and British inhabitants of the region during the Civil War.⁴⁸ Even on an island jointly claimed by Great Britain and the United States, certain Americans and Britons managed to communicate feelings of mutual affection and solidarity.

In another regional example of Anglo-American solidarity, during the spring of 1864 several Americans arrived from nearby Washington Territory to participate in festivities honouring the birthday of Queen Victoria.⁴⁹ Among the visitors from the United States were several ladies and even a pair of officers from the American garrison on San Juan Island.⁵⁰ Like Britons commemorating the Fourth of July in Victoria and New Westminster, the Americans

⁴⁶ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “Excursion & Picnic to the American Garrison, San Juan Island, on the Str. Enterprise,” August 20, 1863, 2.

⁴⁷ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Picnic to San Juan Island,” August 28, 1863, 3.

⁴⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Picnic to San Juan Island,” 3.

⁴⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “Visitors,” May 23, 1864, 3.

⁵⁰ *Daily British Colonist*, “Visitors,” 3.

arrived in Victoria to celebrate the national holiday of their friends and neighbours, in a gesture of mutual respect and solidarity.

As Northern armies gradually conquered the Confederacy and forcefully restored the Union, the local press in British Columbia and Vancouver Island expressed relief that the brutality of the American Civil War would finally stop, and conveyed its respect for the United States in persevering through such a tumultuous chapter in its national history. In her pioneering study *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War*, Helen G. Macdonald argues that as the Civil War dragged on, many Canadians increasingly viewed the North with hostility, but in the case of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, editorials in regional newspapers reveal that local Britons appeared gratified at the potential conclusion of hostilities, and admired the Lincoln government for enduring through such national hardship.⁵¹ On six separate occasions between 1 September 1864 and 17 April 1865 the *Chronicle* published major editorials conveying solidarity with the Union cause and relief that the Civil War was coming to an end.⁵² The *Colonist* conveyed similar attitudes during the same period, featuring four notable articles on Union victory from 7 September 1864 to 14 April 1865.⁵³ In the fall of 1864, while reporting on the advance of Union forces through Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia, the *Chronicle* declared hope for the rapid end of the conflict, proclaiming “we believe we but speak the sentiments of every right-minded man in expressing a desire to see this cruel and devastating war brought to a

⁵¹ Helen G. Macdonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 80.

⁵² *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The War News,” September 1, 1864, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “From the Seat of War,” September 28, 1864, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The News,” November 9, 1864, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The News,” March 2, 1865, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Beginning of the End,” April 10, 1865, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Hour of Victory,” April 17, 1865, 2.

⁵³ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” September 7, 1864, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” November 23, 1864, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “The Fall of Richmond,” April 11, 1865, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” April 14, 1865, 2.

close.”⁵⁴ With Northern victory now almost assured, the *Chronicle* asserted support for the restoration of the Union and predicted the end of the conflict was not far away.⁵⁵ Around the same time the *Colonist* carried news of the fall of Atlanta, Georgia to Union forces, and referred to the United States victory as “the great turning point of the war.”⁵⁶ Revealing the hope of local Britons to finally witness the end of the Civil War, the *Colonist* commented that every Northern victory represented “a step closer to that peace which is as much the desire of neutral spectators as it is the wish of every lover of freedom in the American Union.”⁵⁷ Such editorials conveyed that British subjects in the region desired an end to the carnage just as much as their loyal American friends and neighbours, who they hoped to see enjoy the blessing of peace once more.

A few weeks later the *Chronicle* eagerly informed readers that the tide of Union victory rolled on, and articulated an earnest desire for peace.⁵⁸ The *Chronicle* conveyed solidarity with the Lincoln government, regarding Union victory as the only guarantee for peace between North and South and the restoration of the United States.⁵⁹ Noting the steady advance of the Union Army towards the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, the newspaper hoped Southern leaders would realize the hopelessness of their cause and sue for peace.⁶⁰ The following spring the *Chronicle* jubilantly detailed the fall of Charleston, South Carolina to the North, predicting the imminent collapse of the South.⁶¹ The *Chronicle* declared that local Britons, like their American friends and neighbours, “cannot but rejoice at the prospect of a speedy peace,”

⁵⁴ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The War News,” 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “From the Seat of War,” 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁰ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The News,” 2.

⁶¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The News,” 2.

detailing the shared relief felt by residents of the colonies, regardless of nationality.⁶² The *Colonist* criticized Southern leaders for refusing to negotiate with the United States government and stop the fighting, despite the hopeless character of their position, arguing “the Confederacy has nothing before it but further ruin and further bloodshed.”⁶³ Local Britons welcomed the end of the conflict with relief, believing that the restoration of the Union was the only means of bringing lasting peace to the United States.

United States Consul Allen Francis also noticed the increasing solidarity of local Britons towards the Union war effort as Southern defeat appeared inevitable, writing to American Secretary of State William Seward on the spring of 1865 “it is gratifying to notice the change in the sentiments of the English people here in regard to our Government and its efforts to put down the rebellion, and to sustain its honor and integrity.”⁶⁴ The shift by the Lincoln administration to focus on the abolition of slavery as a central war goal, as discussed previously, garnered strong support from Britons in the colonies, who began to overwhelmingly sympathize with the North. Although Francis never provided any concrete evidence in his letters for the precise reasons why Britons in the colonies increasingly favoured the Northern cause, given the expressions raised in the local press, the shift towards ending slavery by the American federal government improved public opinion of the Union war effort in British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

Later that spring the *Chronicle* detailed the fall of Richmond, and looked with excitement to the demise of the Confederacy and victory of the United States.⁶⁵ The *Colonist* also

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶³ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” 2.

⁶⁴ Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, March 4, 1865,” in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 1 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

⁶⁵ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Beginning of the End,” 2.

anticipated the end of hostilities between North and South, communicating its wish for a postwar peace settlement that would restore the nation and end sectional strife.⁶⁶ A few days later the *Colonist* wrote of the surrender of Southern General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House, eagerly predicting that his surrender “virtually terminates the war.”⁶⁷ The paper praised Lincoln’s magnanimity in recently visiting the Confederate capital to show his leniency towards the Southern people and to help facilitate peace.⁶⁸ In another editorial the *Colonist* lauded the Lincoln government for refusing to relent during the agonizing years of the Civil War and guiding the United States through the most trying chapter in its national history.⁶⁹ In achieving victory over the Southern bid for independence, the United States proved, according to the *Colonist*, “that a republic may be, not only in a moral sense but in a military sense, strong.”⁷⁰ Predicting the gentle reintegration of former rebels by United States officials of the newly restored Union, the newspaper proclaimed “that sense of national justice which impelled them to fight will surely not forsake them now.” With the conclusion of the American Civil War now in sight, local Britons demonstrated a noticeable sense of relief that the bitter fighting between North and South was finally ending, and showed their solidarity with the Lincoln government for managing to restore the Union during what was regarded as a potentially devastating chapter in the history of the United States.

Lastly, the manner in which Britons in British Columbia and Vancouver Island responded to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln also vividly demonstrated their solidarity with the United States. As news of Lincoln’s death on 15 April 1865 arrived in the colonies, local

⁶⁶ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Fall of Richmond,” 2.

⁶⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” 2.

⁶⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “The News,” 2.

⁶⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Hour of Victory,” 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Britons reacted with shock and dismay, joining their American friends and neighbours in public displays of grief and mourning. Over the course of a couple of days the *Colonist* featured three articles lamenting the death of the fallen American president.⁷¹ The *Chronicle* reacted similarly and published three features expressing solidarity with local Americans during the same period.⁷² Verney described the scene in Victoria to his father as initial reports of Lincoln's death reached Vancouver Island, emphasizing that the news created an immediate sensation.⁷³ When news reached Victoria via the steamer *Eliza Anderson* of Lincoln's assassination, local Americans and Britons quickly lowered their national flags to half-mast as a mark of respect.⁷⁴ According to Verney, Royal Navy vessels stationed at Victoria joined in mourning Lincoln, dropping not only their British colours to half-mast, but also those of the American flag.⁷⁵ The next day businesses and offices throughout the city lowered their flags to half-mast, regardless of the nationality of their proprietors, again demonstrating the solidarity of local Britons with loyal Americans mourning their fallen leader.⁷⁶ As evidence of the immense sadness felt by local Britons in response to Lincoln's death, the *Chronicle* asserted the mourning was not confined to American citizens, and that general grief was apparent throughout Victoria.⁷⁷

The *Chronicle* and *Colonist* both featured editorials eulogizing the late president. Writing of the shock that word of Lincoln's death brought to Victoria among Americans and Britons, the

⁷¹ *Daily British Colonist*, "At Half Mast," April 19, 1865, 3; *Daily British Colonist*, "The Death of Lincoln," April 19, 1865, 2; *Daily British Colonist*, "Commemoration of the Death of Abraham Lincoln," April 20, 1865, 3.

⁷² *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Tokens of Sympathy," April 19, 1865, 3; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Death of Abraham Lincoln," April 19, 1865, 2; *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Assassination of President Lincoln – Public Expression of Sympathy," April 20, 1865, 2.

⁷³ Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 256.

⁷⁴ *Daily British Colonist*, "At Half Mast," 3.

⁷⁵ Verney, *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 256.

⁷⁶ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "Tokens of Sympathy," 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

Colonist stressed “no news could have more startled our community.”⁷⁸ Arguing “it is not on the American people only that this news will fall with a sickening force, but on liberty-loving mankind everywhere,” the *Colonist* framed the assassination of Lincoln as an event of critical significance to supporters of freedom around the world, including Britons in Victoria who sympathized with the Northern cause to restore the Union and end slavery.⁷⁹ According to the newspaper, the tragedy of the president’s death was all the more saddening to local Americans and Britons because Lincoln was poised to rid the United States of slavery, at last concluding what it described as “that work for which enlightened humanity was waiting with anxious expectancy.”⁸⁰ The *Chronicle* also noted that just prior to his death, with Northern victory assured, the United States seemed ready to enter a glorious new age, commenting that “long years of anxiety were about to be rewarded with success.”⁸¹ In ending slavery, the United States would finally join Great Britain in abolishing an institution seen as archaic and oppressive.

Writing of the intense grief overwhelming Victoria’s inhabitants in the wake of Lincoln’s death, the *Chronicle* contended “no sadder news has ever fallen upon the ear of the community than that which arrived yesterday morning.”⁸² The *Colonist* emphasized that, in Lincoln’s passing, “the world lost what it cannot afford to lose – a sincere, earnest, indefatigable laborer for the human race,” which created a monumental sense of loss for Britons in Victoria, as well as their American friends and neighbours.⁸³ In expressing their sympathy for Americans mourning the death of their president, Victoria’s Britons articulated their own feelings of grief, rooted in their opposition to slavery and solidarity with the Union cause.

⁷⁸ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Death of Lincoln,” 2.

⁷⁹ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Death of Lincoln,” 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Death of Abraham Lincoln,” April 19, 1865, 2.

⁸² *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Death of Abraham Lincoln,” 2.

⁸³ *Daily British Colonist*, “The Death of Lincoln,” 2.

In New Westminster, the *British Columbian* also met word of Lincoln's death with revulsion and shock, describing the news as "of a startling character."⁸⁴ The newspaper considered the assassination of Lincoln all the more tragic given the imminence of victory for the Union after years of struggle and contended that his death just as he was preparing to finally restore the United States to peace was an appalling injustice.⁸⁵ Like the press in Victoria, the *Columbian* regarded the loss of Lincoln as a catastrophic mournful event for both Americans and Britons in the colonies.⁸⁶ The assassination of Lincoln was a moment for local Britons to publicly grieve with their American friends and neighbours in the colonies, and to symbolically express their solidarity with the United States government as it emerged from the Civil War and finally rejected slavery.

As evidence of the significance of the solemn occasion, the day after news reached Victoria of Lincoln's death was spontaneously observed to mourn and respect the late president's memory. A committee of American residents banded together to organize a commemoration in honour of Lincoln, and invited the participation of all nationalities present in Victoria.⁸⁷ Demonstrating the admiration and dignity with which Victoria's Britons treated the memory of Lincoln, the affair quickly became a general holiday, with all businesses and government offices closing in recognition of the late president.⁸⁸ The grief displayed by all residents, regardless of nationality, motivated the *Chronicle* to remark that "on no previous occasion have we witnessed so general an expression of real sympathy."⁸⁹ The support of Victoria inhabitants during the day of commemoration even caught the attention of United States Consul Allen Francis, who wrote

⁸⁴ *British Columbian*, "The News," April 20, 1865, 3.

⁸⁵ *British Columbian*, "The News," 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁷ *Daily British Colonist*, "Commemoration of the Death of Abraham Lincoln," 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, "The Assassination of President Lincoln – Public Expression of Sympathy," 2.

to Seward that “the Americans and English residents, and all nationalities joined in rendering respect to the memory of our deceased President.”⁹⁰ As a mark of courtesy and respect, government offices lowered the Union Jack to half-mast, as did many businesses with British proprietors.⁹¹ The *Camelion*, *Forward*, and *Grappler*, Royal Navy vessels stationed at Esquimalt, displayed both the American and British flags as an expression of their solidarity with the United States.⁹² Writing of the sadness over Lincoln’s death felt by both Americans and Britons, bonded through their imagined support of freedom and opposition to slavery, the *Colonist* explained “the whole community evidently felt that the cause of humanity had sustained an irreparable loss.”⁹³ The commemoration concluded with an event at the Colonial Theatre attended by Governor Kennedy, Mayor Thomas Harris, and several members of the Vancouver Island Legislative Assembly, including Robert Burnaby, Selim Franklin, and Dr. William Tolmie, as well as Francis, who spoke briefly of his personal friendship with Lincoln.⁹⁴ As further evidence of the colonial administration of Vancouver Island’s solidarity with the American government, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution expressing regret for “the calamity which has befallen the United States of America,” and Kennedy also wrote privately to Francis in order to extend his sincerest sympathies.⁹⁵ The tributes made by the governor and other members of the colonial administration in recognizing Lincoln’s assassination signalled the relevance of the event for local Britons, who acted as sympathetic friends joined in grief with their American neighbours.

⁹⁰ Allen Francis, “Letter to Secretary of State William H. Seward, April 22, 1865,” in *Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Victoria, Canada, 1862-1906*, 1 (Washington, D.C.: United States National Archives and Records Administration, 1985).

⁹¹ *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, “The Assassination of President Lincoln – Public Expression of Sympathy,” 2.

⁹² *Daily British Colonist*, “Commemoration of the Death of Abraham Lincoln,” 3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁵ Arthur Edward Kennedy, “Kennedy to Cardwell, April 25, 1865,” *Colonial Despatches: The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1846-1871*, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/access.htm> (accessed June 17, 2011).

Colonial officials recognized the death of Lincoln as of tragic significance to their own notions of freedom, which appeared to be shifting closer towards those of the United States.

Throughout the Civil War, Britons in British Columbia and Vancouver Island regularly interacted and mingled with Americans from the Northern United States, participating in myriad social occasions. Public celebrations provided the chance for local Britons to reflect on their shared cultural, political, and religious heritage with American friends and neighbours. In marking American holidays like the Fourth of July, Britons demonstrated their solidarity with the Union cause. Britons, while keenly supportive of the North, expressed gratitude that their country was spared the brutality and carnage of the Civil War. Perceptions of republican government also shifted as Union victory appeared inevitable and the realization emerged that the newly restored United States was now even more powerful than prior to the start of the Civil War. Key moments during the conflict also motivated British subjects to gravitate ever closer towards the United States. Britons expressed intense relief as the Civil War finally drew to a close, and gained a newfound respect of the United States for managing to persevere through the secession crisis and an agonizing rebellion. Knowledge that the United States was at last abolishing slavery also served as a critical means for Britons to sympathize further with the American government as subjects of an empire that had long since outlawed bonded labour. Lastly, the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln brought local Britons closer to American residents of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. In mourning the fallen president, many Britons in the colonies expressed their views of Lincoln as a symbol of freedom, not just for American citizens, but for all of humanity. In recognizing Lincoln's monumental work throughout the course of the American Civil War, Britons were admiring his imagined legacy of

fostering stability and finally outlawing slavery, values that were seen as quintessential elements of recent British history.

Conclusion

Despite their seeming distance from the major battlefields of the conflict, the remote British Pacific colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island experienced the American Civil War as a defining event that signalled important consequences for the region. The dramatic impact of hostilities between North and South manifested itself within the region in several notable ways. The American Civil War strained relations between the governments of Great Britain and the United States, even in the British Empire's Pacific colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Tensions between Great Britain and the United States throughout the conflict frequently generated anxieties surrounding the defence of British Columbia and Vancouver Island from the possibility of an American invasion. The presence of a significant American population of both Northern and Southern origin in the colonies also raised problems during the Civil War, as both factions organized to assist their respective cause, regardless of British neutrality. Southerners in the colonies also regularly caught the attention of United States Consul Allen Francis, who closely followed rumours involving the outfitting of Confederate privateers at Victoria. African-Americans in Victoria paid careful attention to the conflict, celebrating the gradual abolition of slavery in the United States, even while experiencing heightened racial discrimination during the period of the Civil War. While the press in Victoria often linked such acts of racial prejudice with local Southerners, Britons in the community also occasionally worked to exclude African-Americans from social and public life, although typically in a much more subtle manner. Despite a general characterization of Vancouver Island as more 'American' and British Columbia as more "British", if the newspapers are a reliable index, there was seldom any marked difference of opinion between British Columbia and Vancouver Island residents on the major subjects of the conflict. While initially skeptical of Union efforts to suppress the Southern bid for

independence, Britons in the colonies increasingly supported the North as the Lincoln administration gradually embraced the abolition of slavery as a central aim of the war. By the conclusion of hostilities between North and South, Britons and British Columbians were fully behind the Union cause, and looked excitedly towards the emergence of a United States that finally seemed to offer the kind of freedom initially promised in the Declaration of Independence. The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln shocked the colonies, and led to an intense outpouring of public support and sympathy for the fallen American leader, whose death at the precise moment of Union triumph struck local Britons as an extremely cruel twist of fate for a nation struggling to heal itself. Such is the fertile legacy of the American Civil War in not just British Columbia, but all of Canada, if only we pause to reflect on the tremendous implications of the conflict for Britons across the border from the United States, from 1861 to 1865, and indeed today.

This project has attempted to articulate the profound impact of the American Civil War on British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Regardless of their geographical distance from the fighting, the colonies considered the Civil War a major event that would forever alter not just the United States, but also the entirety of North America. My work has hinted at the possibilities of future scholarship in analyzing the consequences of the Civil War in other distant regions that, although physically isolated from the conflict, still actively followed events in the United States from afar, and pondered the potential impact of the conflict on their own concerns and interests. I also hope that my research has perhaps opened up new possibilities for further studies of the specific issues that I selected to focus on concerning British Columbia and Vancouver Island from the period of 1861 to 1865, as there is certainly still plenty of work to be completed on the role of the American Civil War in both shaping and defining colonial life during this period.

Epilogue: “Hastening and Directing the March of Events”: The Influence of the American Civil War on the Movement towards Canadian Self-Government

Though the guns fell silent in the spring of 1865, finally ending the American Civil War, the legacy of the fighting lingered on, even in seemingly faraway British North America. For many Britons in the colonies, the conflict seemed to expose the woeful weaknesses of British Columbia and Vancouver Island to the United States, especially given the immense scale of American military might. With over a million soldiers serving in the now triumphant Union Army, Britons worried that the United States might prefer to attempt the conquest of British North America, rather than face the challenges of integrating so many veterans into the peacetime economy. Fears of military weakness in British North America and the logistical difficulty of Great Britain defending its continental holdings from the United States inspired colonial leaders to set their provincial differences aside and move towards Confederation.¹

Given American accusations of sly British support for the Confederacy during the conflict, many of these concerns were justified, and the possibility of the United States invading British North America as punishment for Great Britain’s perceived southern sympathies was entirely plausible. Of pressing concern to Anglo-American relations was the ongoing issue of the *Alabama* Claims, in which the United States argued that the British government had violated the principles of neutrality during the Civil War by permitting the construction of Confederate warships in Great Britain. Since Confederate warships, such as the CSS *Alabama* and CSS *Tallahassee*, managed to damage and sink many American merchant vessels throughout the

¹ P.B. Waite, *Confederation, 1854-1867*, ed. David P. Gagan and Anthony W. Rasporich (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1972), 15; Adam Mayers, *Dixie and the Dominion: Canada, the Confederacy, and the War for the Union* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2003), 12.

conflict, the government of the United States might seek revenge. Given the massive size of the Union Army, the North was certainly presented with a unique opportunity to try and conquer Canada after defeating the Confederacy. In addition, between 1866 and 1871, the Fenian Brotherhood, an Irish organization dedicated to compelling the British government to leave Ireland, conducted a series of raids from the United States into Canada. The Fenian Brotherhood was largely comprised of veterans of the Union Army, with the organization consisting of an impressive 50,000 members at its height.² American authorities initially responded late to the Fenian threat, and President Andrew Johnson even hinted that the United States would consider recognizing an Irish republic on Canadian soil.³ In another act that put pressure on British North America, the purchase of Alaska in 1867 by the United States from the Russian Empire for \$7.2 million was intended by American Secretary of State William Seward to besiege British Columbia and encourage the colony, if not the entirety of Canada, to join the Union.⁴

The potential threat of American aggression following the Civil War was among the many factors that motivated Canadian leaders, such as George Brown, George-Étienne Cartier, and John A. Macdonald, to pursue the confederation of the British North American colonies. In 1867, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia joined with the Province of Canada in forming the semi-independent Dominion of Canada, in a further display of solidarity by Britons on the continent in response to the imagined American threat of invasion. By establishing their own political bonds and taking steps to separate from Great Britain, Canadian leaders hoped that partially separating

² Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2010), 796.

³ Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 796.

⁴ The 1871 Treaty of Washington between Great Britain and the United States established a tribunal to resolve the *Alabama* Claims, which decided on 14 September 1872 that the British government owed \$15.5 million, including interest, for damages resulting from the attacks of Confederate cruisers. Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations Volume II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 13; Foreman, *A World on Fire*, 802-803.

themselves from Great Britain might dissuade the United States from attempting to conquer Canada as a means of punishing the British government for its supposed Confederate sympathies during the conflict. Furthermore, the new Dominion of Canada held the tantalizing prospect of a confederation of former British North American colonies stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, provided that British Columbia could be compelled to join.

Shortly after the conclusion of the American Civil War the British government united the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Amor de Cosmos, editor of the *Colonist*, who in 1863 became a member of the General Assembly of Vancouver, firmly believed that the merging of British Columbia and Vancouver Island was necessary prior to the colonies joining any broader British North American entity.⁵ That year settlers of British Columbia obtained the appointment of their own governor, in order to manage their own affairs separately from Vancouver Island.⁶ On the retirement of James Douglas from leadership of both colonies, Frederick Seymour was appointed inaugural governor of British Columbia, and was received joyously by the local population.⁷ Henry-Pelham Clinton, Duke of Newcastle and British Secretary of State for the Colonies, preferred the union of British Columbia and Vancouver Island rather than distinct governments for each colony.⁸ Though most Vancouver Island residents firmly supported union, many of those in British Columbia wished to remain separate, and were backed by Governor Seymour.⁹ Both colonies bombarded the Colonial Office with resolutions either opposing or supporting union.¹⁰ The annual cost of governing British

⁵ "J.I. Little, "The Foundations of Government," in *The Pacific Province: a History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J.M. Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 71.

⁶ Little, "The Foundations of Government," 73.

⁷ Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1958), 200.

⁸ Little, "The Foundations of Government," 74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 217.

Columbia and Vancouver Island was approximately \$1 million, and with both colonies running an annual deficit, maintaining separate administrations was simply too wasteful for the British government to justify, regardless of the conflicting views expressed by particular settlers.¹¹ By 1865, the debt of British Columbia and Vancouver Island was a staggering \$1,389,830, up from a mere \$30,440 in 1859.¹² To make matters worse, the population of the colonies was steadily declining, and dipped below 10,000 in 1866.¹³ The economic prospects of the colonies appeared bleak at the end of the Civil War, prompting the British government to cut costs through political union.¹⁴ With gold exports in decline, and the abrogation of the 1854 Canadian-American Reciprocity by the United States, the initial prosperity of the colonies already appeared to be over.¹⁵ As a further blow to opponents of the idea, after returning from England in 1865, even Seymour became an ardent supporter of colonial union.¹⁶ The issue culminated in the spring of 1866 when the colonies were finally merged.¹⁷ The capital of the united colony of British Columbia was left to the legislature, which ultimately decided on Victoria, with Seymour retaining his position as governor. Though colonial union was sound from an administrative standpoint, the circumstances of the Civil War played an important role in influencing the final decision. Growing fears of American power shaped the feelings of local Britons, who sought measures to strengthen the power of Great Britain in North America.

Convinced by a generous deal that offered to assume the debt of the colony and promised the completion of a transcontinental railway, British Columbia formally joined Confederation on

¹¹ Paul Phillips, "Confederation and the Economy of British Columbia," in *British Columbia and Confederation*, ed. W. George Shelton (Victoria: Morriss Printing Company, 1965), 62.

¹² Paul Phillips, "Confederation and the Economy of British Columbia," 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴ Little, "The Foundations of Government," 74.

¹⁵ Phillips, "Confederation and the Economy of British Columbia," 59.

¹⁶ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 220.

¹⁷ Little, "The Foundations of Government," 74.

20 July 1871, becoming the sixth province of Canada. By the time the Civil War concluded there was already significant support for Confederation in British Columbia, particularly among prominent colonial figures such as newspaper editors and politicians Amor de Cosmos, John Robson, and David William Higgins, in addition to the plan enjoying the approval of the British Colonial Office.¹⁸ The anxieties generated by the Civil War motivated the colonies to consider uniting with the other British North American provinces as a possible counter to the imagined American threat. As the conflict progressed certain Britons in the colonies increasingly imagined the disparate colonial governments of British North America joining to form a single and united continental nation stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific.¹⁹ By joining the Dominion of Canada, settlers in British Columbia were opting to assist in the creation of a new nation with enduring ties to Great Britain that would hopefully prove strong enough to stave off any lingering American desire to achieve Manifest Destiny. As testament to support for Confederation within British Columbia, as early as 1868 certain citizens were already celebrating Dominion Day.²⁰ Without the Civil War to provide dangerous omens of American power, the Confederation experiment would have in all likelihood been delayed years, if not decades, and the participation of British Columbia and Vancouver Island might not have been so easily realized.

The conclusion of the American Civil War increasingly defined British identity in North America within a space that was distinct from the neighbouring United States. Anxieties regarding colonial defence and fears of American military strength played a critical role in

¹⁸ Little, "The Foundations of Government," 69.

¹⁹ Robin W. Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 177.

²⁰ Little, "The Foundations of Government," 87.

motivating the disparate colonies of British North America to pursue measures that might dissuade the United States from trying to annex them. Even in the remote Pacific colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, concerns surrounding the immense and now triumphant Union Army motivated colonial leaders both within the region and in Great Britain to adopt the policy of colonial union. By politically integrating British Columbia and Vancouver Island, colonial authorities hoped to demonstrate the wishes of settlers to band together, and to set a precedent that would perhaps anticipate the future union of all the various colonies of British North America. In 1871, lured by the pledge of the Canadian government to assume the debt of the colony and build a transcontinental railway, British Columbia joined Confederation. The promise of a nation based on British customs and institutions, rather than American democratic values, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific was now almost complete, thanks, in no small part, to the anxieties and concerns raised by the American Civil War.

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