

San Juan Island

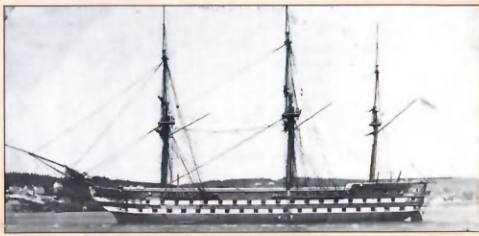
San Juan Island
National Historical Park
Washington

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



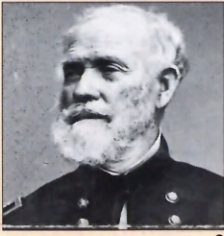
San Juan Island in the summer of 1859 was an international tinderbox as military forces of Great Britain and the United States stood face to face in a confrontation that could at any moment plunge both nations into war. The cause of the crisis—the death of a pig!



Key to Illustrations:
1 Blockhouse at English Camp. 2 San Juan Harbor (now Griffin Bay) from American Camp, 1860. Watercolor by James M. Alden. Courtesy Washington State Historical Society. 4 HMS Ganges, 1860. Watercolor by James M. Alden. Courtesy National Archives. 3 Bellevue Farm, Hudson's Bay Company, 1860. Watercolor by James M. Alden. Courtesy Washington State Historical Society.



Admiral Baynes's flagship, ca. 1860. Courtesy Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C. 5 Map showing the rival claims of the United States and Great Britain to San Juan Island. 6 Gen. Win-



field Scott. 7 Sir James Douglas. Courtesy Public Archives of Canada. 8 Brig. Gen. William S. Harney. 9 Rear Adm. Robert L. Baynes. Courtesy Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C. 10 Ameri-



“It would be a shocking event if . . . two nations should be precipitated into a war respecting the possession of a small island.”

From the instructions to Gen. Winfield Scott, September 16, 1859.

The “Pig War,” as the confrontation on San Juan Island came to be called, had its origin in the Anglo-American dispute over the possession of the Oregon Country, that vast expanse of land comprising today's states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, parts of Montana and Wyoming, and the Province of British Columbia.

The Joint Occupation Treaty of 1818 had opened the Oregon Country to both British and American settlers, but by 1845 both parties had grown discontented with this arrangement. The British, determined to resist the tide of American migration sweeping across the Rocky Mountains, argued that the Americans were trespassing on land guaranteed to Britain by earlier treaties and explorations and through trading activities of the long-established Hudson's Bay Company. Americans considered the British presence an affront to their “manifest destiny to overspread the continent” and rejected the idea that the land west of the Rockies should remain under foreign influence. Both nations blustered and threatened, but wiser counsels eventually prevailed and in June 1846 the Oregon question was resolved peacefully.

The Oregon Treaty of 1846 gave the United States undisputed possession of the Pacific Northwest south of the 49th parallel, extending the boundary “to the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver's Island; and thence southerly through the middle of the said channel, and of Fuca's straits to the Pacific Ocean.” But while the treaty settled the larger boundary question, it created additional problems because its wording left unclear who owned San Juan Island.

The difficulty arose over that portion of the boundary described as the “middle of the channel” separating British-owned Vancouver Island from the mainland. Actually, there were two channels: one, Haro Strait, nearest Vancouver Island, and another, Rosario Strait, nearer the mainland. San Juan Island lay between the two. Britain insisted that the boundary ran through Rosario Strait; the Americans claimed it lay through Haro Strait. Thus both sides considered San Juan theirs for settlement.

As early as 1845 the Hudson's Bay Company had posted a notice of possession on San Juan. In 1851 it established a salmon-

curing station there and, two years later, a sheep ranch called Bellevue Farm. About the same time, the territorial legislature of Oregon (which then included today's state of Washington) declared San Juan to be within its territorial limits, and in January 1853 incorporated it into Island County. In March 1853, Washington Territory having been created, San Juan was attached to Whatcom, its northernmost county.

By 1859 there were about 25 Americans on San Juan Island. They were settled on redemption claims which they expected the U.S. Government to recognize as valid but which the British considered illegal. Neither side recognized the authority of the other. Tempers were short and it would take little to produce a crisis.

That crisis came on June 15, 1859, when an American settler named Lyman Cutlar shot and killed a pig belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company because it was rooting in his garden. When British authorities threatened to arrest Cutlar, American citizens drew up a petition requesting U.S. military protection. Brig. Gen. William S. Harney, the commander of the Department of Oregon and

anti-British to boot, responded by sending a company of the 9th U.S. Infantry under Capt. George E. Pickett (of later Civil War fame) to San Juan. Pickett's 66-man unit landed on July 27 and occupied a commanding spot near the Hudson's Bay Company wharf, just north of Bellevue Farm.

James Douglas, governor of the Crown Colony of British Columbia, was angered at the presence of American soldiers on San Juan. He had three British warships under Capt. Geoffrey Hornby sent to dislodge Pickett but with instructions to avoid an armed clash if possible. Pickett, though overwhelmingly outnumbered, refused to withdraw.

Throughout the remaining days of July and well into August, the British force in Griffin Bay (then San Juan Harbor) continued to grow. Captain Hornby, however, wisely refused to take any action against the Americans until the arrival of Rear Adm. Robert L. Baynes, commander of British naval forces in the Pacific. Baynes, appalled at the situation, advised Douglas that he would not “involve two great nations in a war over a squabble about a pig.”

Meantime, Pickett had been reinforced on August 10 by 64 men under Lt. Col. Silas Casey, who now assumed active command. This meager force was still no match for the growing concentration of British vessels and men, so Harney ordered in additional reinforcements. By August 31, 461 Americans, protected by an earthen redoubt and 14 cannons, were opposed by five British warships mounting 167 guns and carrying 2,140 troops, including Royal Marines, artillerymen, sappers, and miners.

When word of the crisis reached Washington, officials there were shocked that the simple action of an irate farmer had grown into an explosive international incident. Alarmed by the prospects, President James Buchanan sent Gen. Winfield Scott, commanding general of the U.S. Army, to investigate and try to contain the affair. Through correspondence with Governor Douglas, Scott managed to secure an agreement whereby a token force from each nation would occupy San Juan until a final settlement could be reached. Harney was officially rebuked and afterwards reassigned for allowing the situation to get so out of hand. Casey's soldiers were withdrawn and

replaced by others under a different officer. On March 21, 1860, British Royal Marines landed on the island's northwest coast and established on Garrison Bay what is now known as “English Camp.”

San Juan Island remained under joint military occupation for the next 12 years. In 1871, when Great Britain and the United States signed the Treaty of Washington, the San Juan question was referred to Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany for settlement. On October 21, 1872, the emperor ruled in favor of the United States, establishing the boundary line through Haro Strait. Thus San Juan became an American possession and the final boundary between Canada and the United States was set. On November 25, 1872, the Royal Marines withdrew from English Camp. By July 1874 the last of the U.S. troops had left American Camp. Peace had finally come to the 49th parallel, and San Juan Island would be long remembered for a military confrontation in which the only casualty was a pig.

English Camp, San Juan Island, from Garrison Bay, early 1860s.



Public Archives of Canada

American Camp, San Juan Island, October 1859.



Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C.

Touring the Park

The park is open year round. Stop first at the information center in Friday Harbor for up-to-date information on park sites and activities. The center is open daily in summer and weekdays (except federal holidays) during the rest of the year.

English Camp lies in tree-sheltered Garrison Bay, about nine miles northwest of Friday Harbor. Four historic buildings and a small formal garden have been restored. The barracks has an audiovisual program explaining the territorial conflict between the United States and Great Britain from 1859 to 1872. Buildings are open daily in summer.

How to Reach the Park

San Juan Island can be reached by Washington State ferries from Anacortes, Wash., 83 miles north of Seattle; or from Sidney, British Columbia,

They are usually closed from early fall to late spring. A self-guiding foot trail begins at the parking lot bulletin board.

American Camp is located on the southern tip of the island, about six miles southeast of Friday Harbor. Two historic buildings survive, along with the remains of a redoubt, an earthen gun emplacement. Other building sites are known, as well as the locations of the Hudson's Bay Company farm, the old town of San Juan, and the American Camp cemetery. Visitor center exhibits focus on the American-British boundary dispute, archeology, and camp life. Except for federal

holidays, the center is open Thursday through Sunday during fall, winter, and spring, and every day during summer. A ranger is on duty to provide information. A self-guiding foot trail, approximately one mile long, begins at the parking lot nearby.

From American Camp's South Beach to English Camp's 650-foot Young Hill, the park's varied landforms are the legacy of repeated glaciation. Rolling, terraced hills mix with occasional steep slopes and bedrock outcrops. Surrounding waters moderate island temperatures and produce a typically mild marine climate. Winters are

Harbor and Roche Harbor. The park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For information, write the Superintendent, P.O. Box 429, Friday Harbor, WA 98250; call 360-378-2240 or TDD 360-378-6216; or www.nps.gov/sajh/home.htm on the Internet.

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overcast and rainy with occasional snow. When the storm tracks shift northward in summer, San Juan Island, lying in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, is left exceptionally dry. Plant and animal communities reflect these environmental and topographical contrasts. Windswept grasslands dominate arid sites at American Camp, home to a variety of raptors and songbirds. Where water is more plentiful on protected north-facing slopes at both of the camps, dense forests of fir, cedar, and maple thrive. Spring and summer wildflowers blanket grassy knolls and open hillsides. Beach alternates with rugged shoreline, and sheltered

bays and coves harbor shorebirds, seals, river otters, and an array of intertidal life.

The park is a day-use only area. No campgrounds are available at either American or English camps. But there are campgrounds on the island, and the county-owned San Juan Park has facilities. Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor have commercial eating and sleeping accommodations. Hunting and off-road travel (by car, truck, motorcycle, or bicycle) are not allowed within the park. Pets are permitted when under physical control. Natural features and ruins must be left undisturbed.

Safety

- Always exercise caution and use common sense
- Look out for insecure footing on primitive trails, steep cliffs, and rock outcrops
- Watch for downed

- limbs and overhanging tree branches
- Swimming is not advised due to the strong currents and cold water
- Tree climbing can be harmful to you and the

- trees
- When picnicking, be alert for yellow jackets.

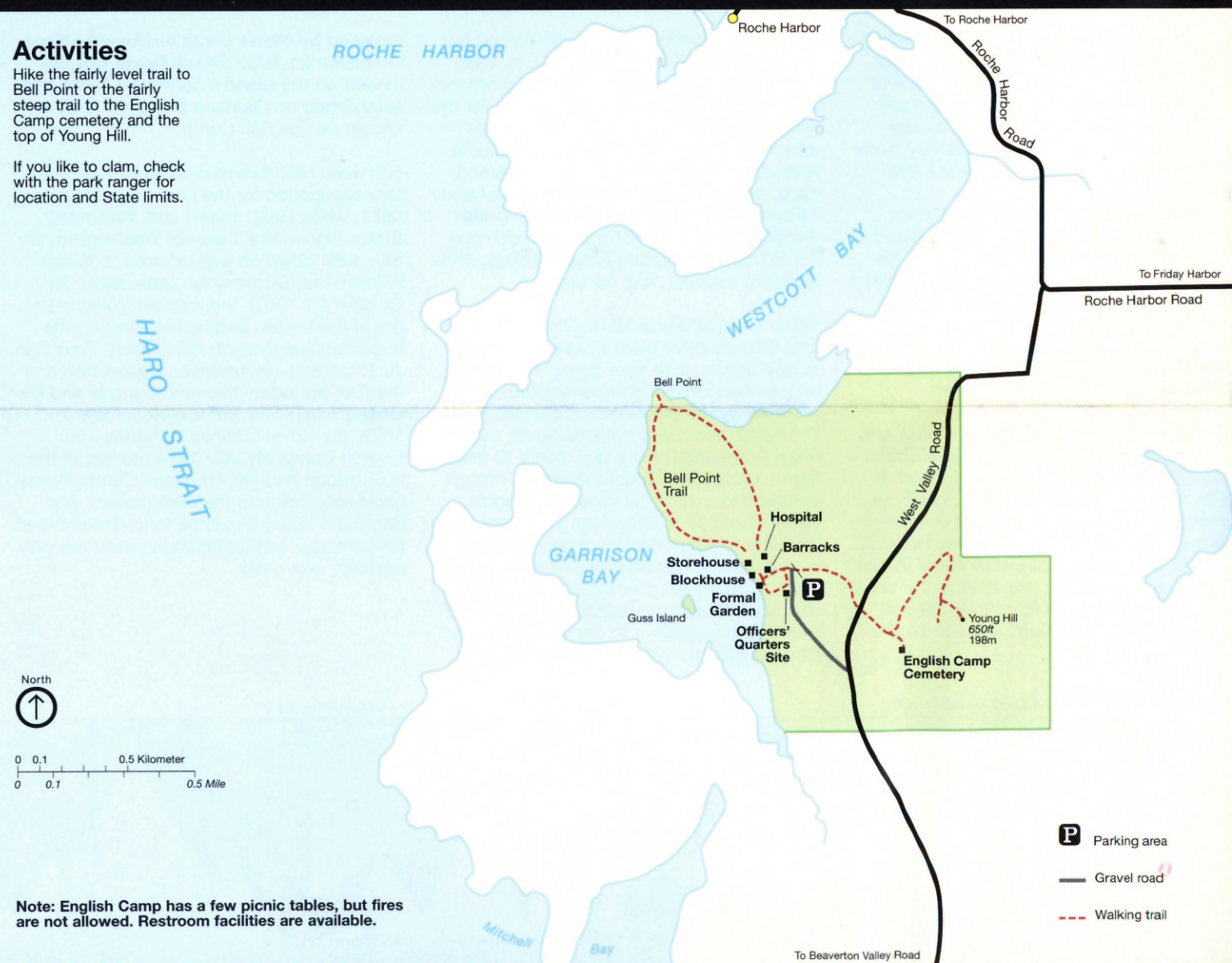
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English Camp

Activities

Hike the fairly level trail to Bell Point or the fairly steep trail to the English Camp cemetery and the top of Young Hill.

If you like to clam, check with the park ranger for location and State limits.



Note: English Camp has a few picnic tables, but fires are not allowed. Restroom facilities are available.

American Camp

Activities

Hike to Jakle's Lagoon along the old roadbed and enjoy the quiet of a Douglas fir canopy. This wooded area shelters many birds, including raptors, and some deer.

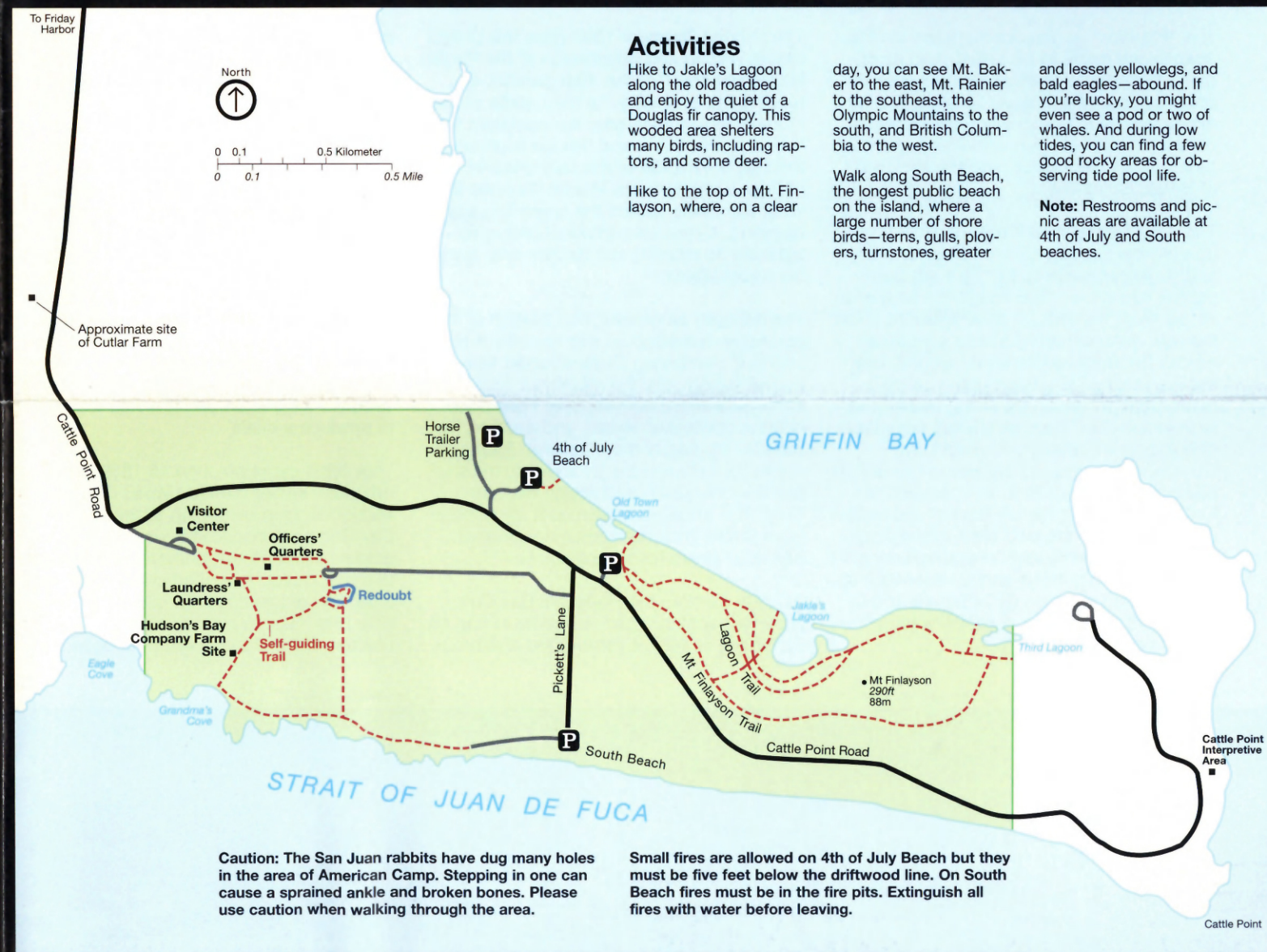
Hike to the top of Mt. Finlayson, where, on a clear

day, you can see Mt. Baker to the east, Mt. Rainier to the southeast, the Olympic Mountains to the south, and British Columbia to the west.

Walk along South Beach, the longest public beach on the island, where a large number of shore birds—terns, gulls, plovers, turnstones, greater

and lesser yellowlegs, and bald eagles—abound. If you're lucky, you might even see a pod or two of whales. And during low tides, you can find a few good rocky areas for observing tide pool life.

Note: Restrooms and picnic areas are available at 4th of July and South beaches.



Caution: The San Juan rabbits have dug many holes in the area of American Camp. Stepping in one can cause a sprained ankle and broken bones. Please use caution when walking through the area.

Small fires are allowed on 4th of July Beach but they must be five feet below the driftwood line. On South Beach fires must be in the fire pits. Extinguish all fires with water before leaving.