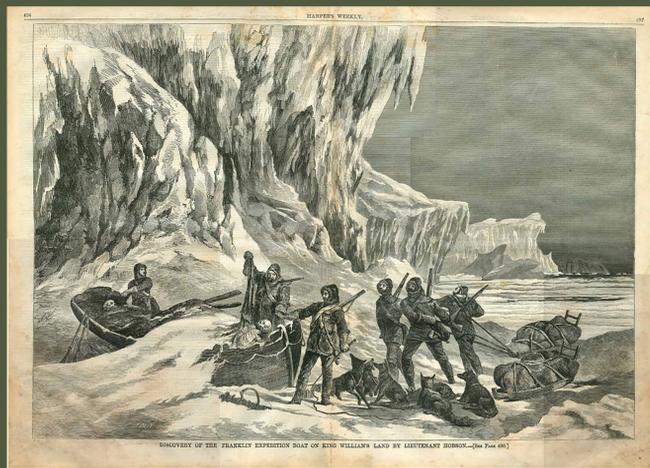


Location, Location, Location

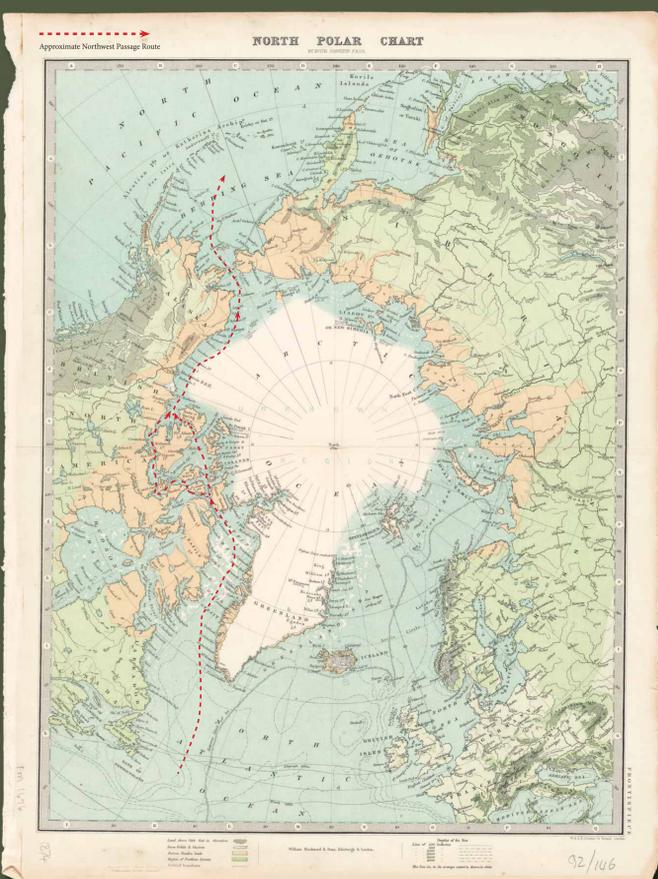
Alaska is of great strategic value to the United States today and Secretary of State William Seward had the vision to recognize this.

Arctic Access

Europeans and Americans had long sought a trade route across North America to China. Sir John Franklin found the Northwest Passage in 1845 by hugging the Arctic coast of North America. The ice pack made the route impractical; however, many expected that challenge could be overcome. Seward saw that Alaska would give the U.S. a foothold in the Arctic, expand its presence in the Pacific, and increase trade with China.



Discovery of the Franklin Expedition Boat on King William Land by Lieutenant Hobson
Image in public domain, first published in Harper's Weekly, 1859, Vol. 3, pp. 596-597.



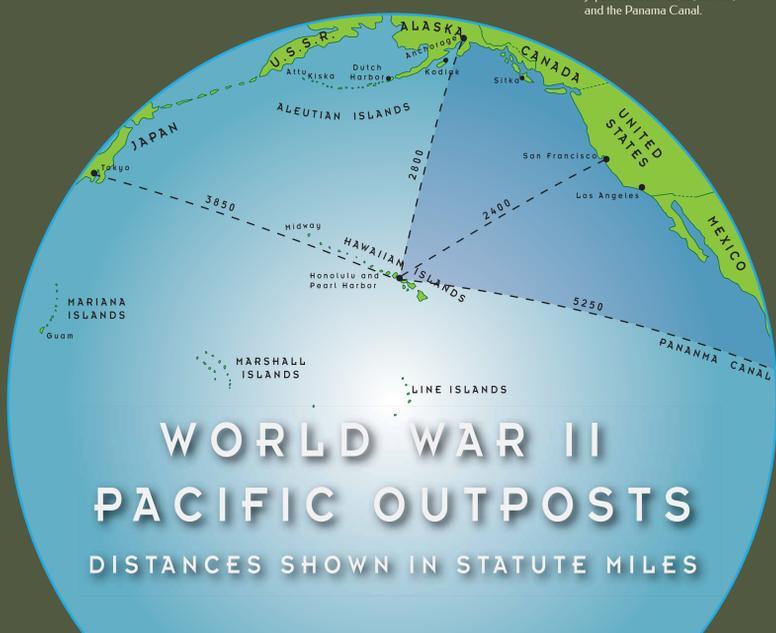
Different Borders

When Americans and Europeans acquired new territories in the 1800s, their policy was to establish their own boundaries and ignore those of the Native people. Indigenous people of the circumpolar Arctic countries had connections with each other. In time, these groups would overcome the borders that separated them and work together for their rights, land claims, and preservation of their culture.

From Royal atlas of modern geography, frontispiece. Created by Alexander Keith Johnston.
Northwest Passage route superimposed, 2016
North polar chart, 1876, Courtesy of University of Alaska, Fairbanks Rare Maps Collection, Alaska & Polar Regions Collections, UAF-03770 (1876), 11666.

Strategic Position

After acquiring Alaska, the U.S. continued expanding its presence in the Pacific, acquiring Hawaii and building the Panama Canal. Alaska's location in the North Pacific proved to be of great military importance during World War II and the Cold War. Situated between the Arctic and Pacific oceans with sea mammals, fish, oil, and gas, was also economically strategic. As aviation developed, Alaska's place along the Great Circle route between Europe and Asia proved as strategic as many hoped the Northwest Passage would be and Seward envisioned.



The World War II U.S. War Plan Orange focused on holding a main line of defense against Japan between Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal.

Timeline:

March 30, 1867	April 9, 1867	June 20, 1867	October 18, 1867	July 27, 1868	July 27, 1868	August 1, 1868	August 15, 1868
Seward and de Stoeckl negotiate Treaty of Cession	U.S. Senate ratifies treaty	Russia and U.S. exchange ratifications	Ceremonial transfer of territory at Sitka	Congress appropriates \$7.2 million to complete purchase	Congress passes Customs Act for Alaska	U.S. Treasury issues check	Russia cashes check

150th Anniversary
Alaska Treaty of Cession
1867~2017