

# Boundary Bay Boundary:

The Trappings of the IBC, The Hunting of the Snark, and the Pining of the Parrot

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## 1869 Agreement

The Boundary Bay boundary is neither the 49th parallel of latitude, nor, indeed, is it a parallel of latitude. Owing to an 1869 Agreement between the two countries, the boundary is a geodesic line between two shore monuments some 20 km apart.

1. July 15 - 1846 -The Oregon Treaty, signed by Britain and the USA, set out that the boundary is the "forty-ninth parallel of north latitude".
2. 1857-1862 - Boundary demarcated
3. May 4 – 7, 1869. It was agreed then by the Commissioners that:"between any two successive defined points... the line of Boundary above described is to be understood to be a right or straight line."
4. February 24, 1870 - The boundary as marked and as mapped was approved and adopted by the USA and the British Envoy. "the marks by which the Boundary to the Eastern Shore of the Gulf of Georgia has been defined upon the ground, are approved, agreed to and adopted by both Governments."

## Range Marks

- 1928 - Range marks placed on Point Roberts to mark the boundary to the west.
- 1933 - There was a considerable fishing industry in Boundary Bay - "It would be in the interests of both countries if the boundary line...were effectively ranged". Users of the bay utilized:

1- Peace Arch to the East

2- "Vista through the timber" to the west
- 1934 - The United State section of the IBC built two range marks at Blaine.

1 - Shore Mark: 5.5 m east of monument 5, "On the prolongation of the straight line through boundary monuments 4 and 5"

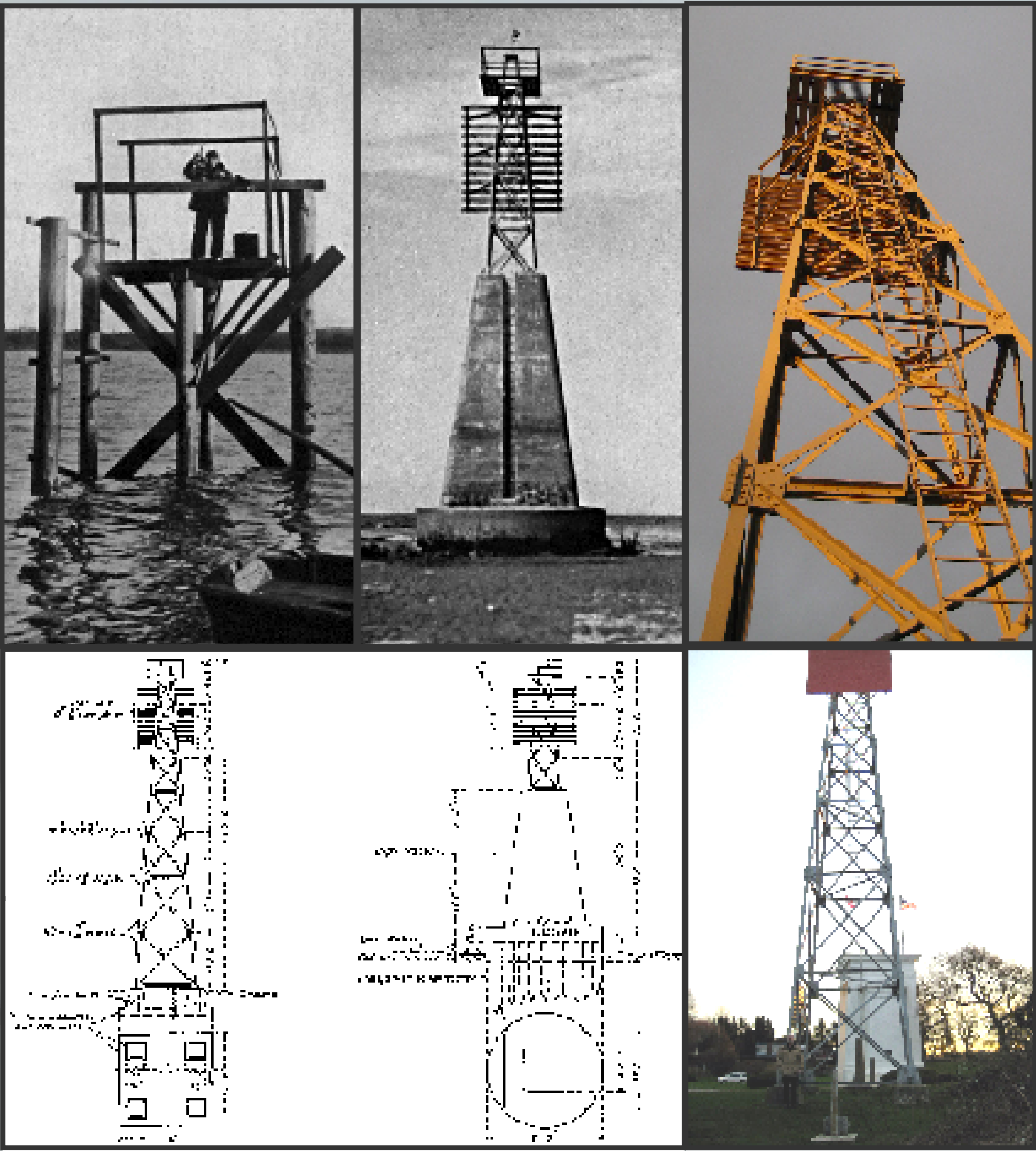
2 - Offshore mark: 1,801.93 m west of monument 5 "on the straight line between monument 4 and 5"
- 1935 - The Canadian section of the IBC built two range marks at Point Roberts

1 - Shore Mark: 75.11 m east of monument 4, "on the exact course of the boundary between monuments 4 and 5"

2 - Offshore mark: 1,095.13 m east of the shore mark, "on the exact course of the boundary between monuments 4 and 5."
- 1951 - A 90' tower was erected in the middle of Point Roberts, which became the rear range mark for the Boundary Bay boundary.

- 35.17 m east of monument 2B, "and 11.5 feet south of the boundary line to allow for the convergence of the parallel"
- 1973 - 90' tower was replaced by a mono-pole tower, topped by a 10' by 12' daymark of aluminum panels
- 2008 - An engineering study and a detailed structural analysis took place in 2003 and 2006, respectively, which indicates that the 1934/35 range towers had exceeded their life expectancy.

- The range marks are to be replaced later this year



Top Left: Locating a range mark site in Boundary Bay (1933-35),  
Top Centre: Offshore range mark (low tide) East side of Boundary Bay (1933-35),  
Top Right: Onshore range mark (2008),  
Bottom Left: Diagrams of Shore and Offshore range marks (1933-35),  
Bottom Right: Onshore range mark and Peace Arch

## Implications of the Range Marks

### 1 - To guide fishers (and others)

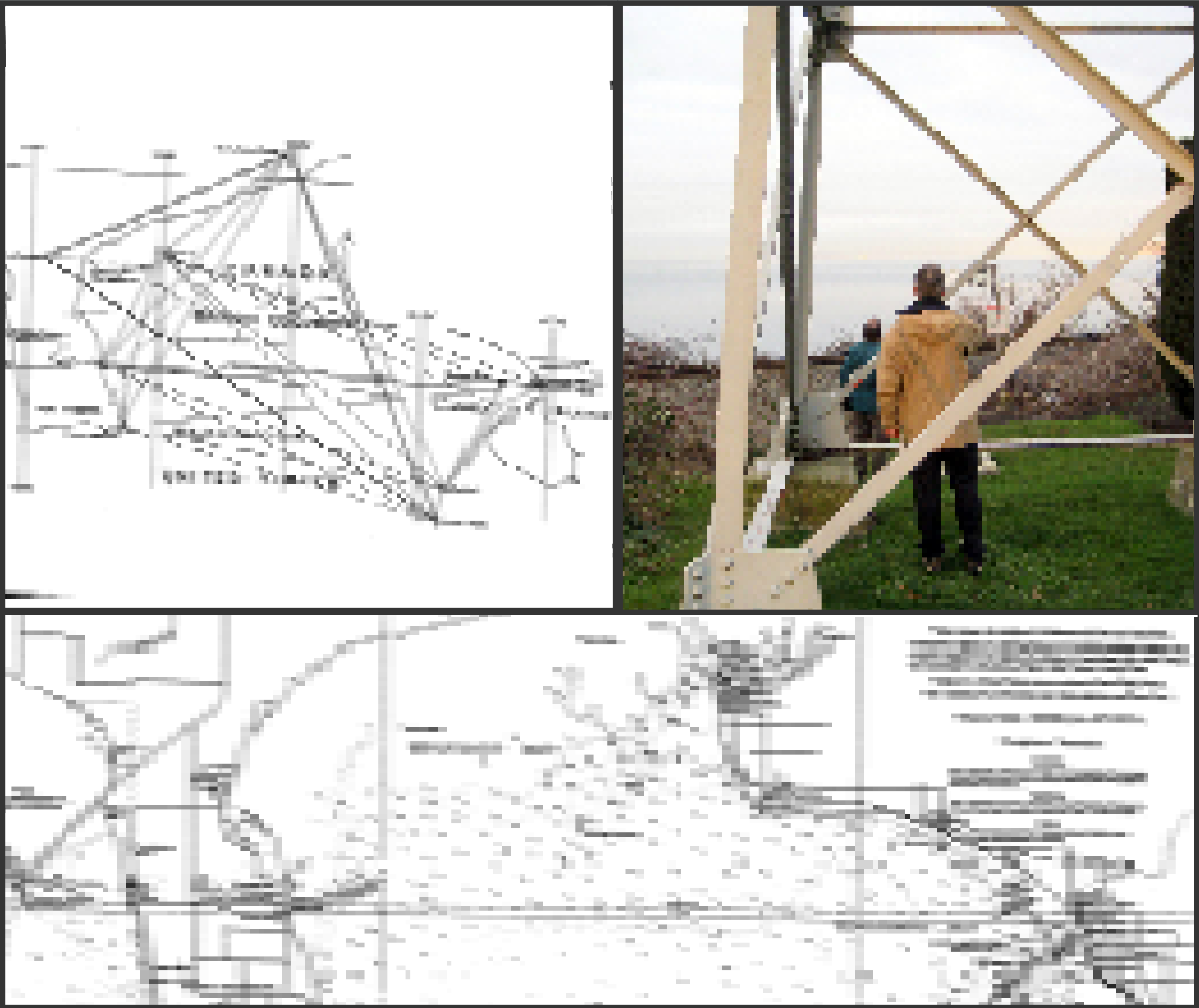
- June 21, 2000 - R v. Chung Hoa Truong & Ca Lan Ung - Expert Witness incorrectly testified that the "the line of the border between the two markers is not the straight line one would see when standing behind a marker and looking past it to the next marker...."
- October 4, 2000 - Fishers were advised at a meeting "that the visual line between the range markers constitutes the Canada/US border."

### 2 - Serving as a base for monitoring devices, such as tide gauges

### 3 - Environmental Impact Assessment

- By 1993 the IBC recognized that the offshore mark, east of Point Roberts, "may be heavily poluted with seabird droppings."
- By 2007, the same range mark, was the setting for strange avian behaviour. Cormorants were sticking their heads between the gate post and the fence post, despite the fence being open. This required action by the IBC.

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Top Left: Sketch showing 1934 triangulation to determine the geographic position of the range marks at Blaine.  
Top Right: Brian Ballantyne (left) and Peter Sullivan (right) near Blaine, Washington looking west across Boundary Bay,  
Bottom: Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS) compiled map showing location of range marks

## Role of the IBC

Demarcating and maintaining the boundary has been the exclusive purview of the International Boundary Commission (IBC) since June 4, 1908, when ratifications were exchanged between the United States and the United Kingdom by which each agreed to appoint an expert geographer or surveyor to serve as Commissioner.

In 1925, a second treaty was ratified in Washington, DC between the United States and Canada that empowered the two Commissioners to maintain an effective boundary line and to determine the location of any point of the boundary line as required. These two fundamental tasks are facilitated by the Commissioners being directed to: inspect the border, to repair and re-build boundary monuments, to keep the boundary vistas open, to place new monuments, and to report annually to their respective Governments. The 1908 and 1925 Treaties continue to guide the two Commissioners.



*"What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators, Tropics, Zones, and Meridian Lines?  
So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply  
They are merely conventional signs!"  
- Lewis Carroll (The Hunting of the Snark)*



Left: Cormorants and range markers - not a good mix  
  
"Mr. Praline: Look, I took the liberty of examining that parrot when I got it home, and I discovered the only reason that it had been sitting on its perch in the first place was that it had been NAILED there."  
  
(pause)  
  
Owner: Well, o'course it was nailed there! If I hadn't nailed that bird down, it would have nuzzled up to those bars, bent 'em apart with its beak, and VOOM! Feeweeweeewee!  
  
Mr. Praline: "VOOM"?!? Mate, this bird wouldn't "voom" if you put four million volts through it! 'E's bleedin' demised!  
  
Owner: No no! 'E's pining!  
  
Mr. Praline: 'E's not pinin! 'E's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! 'E's expired and gone to meet 'is maker! 'E's a stiff! Bereft of life, 'e rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed 'im to the perch 'e'd be pushing up the daisies! 'Is metabolic processes are now 'istory! 'E's off the twig! 'E's kicked the bucket, 'e's shuffled off 'is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisible!! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!!"  
  
- Monty Python (Dead Parrot Sketch)

Above: Tidal Gauge  
Below: Crab dispute

Between 1846 and 2008, the demarcation of the boundary has been a function of technology, expertise, fiscal restraint and users' needs.