

# We Want Out! Americans Push for Secession

## History of Movements Seeking to Declare Independence from the United States of America

*The hype that surrounds presidential elections will always result in some Americans being disconcerted when their candidate loses. Every time the ballot count is completed there are some Americans who threaten to leave the US. But America's disillusionment reached an all-time high after the most recent elections. Tens of thousands have petitioned the White House to grant their state independence from the US. The situation today is reminiscent of many other instances in which individual towns and states sought to secede from the United States.*

• Dov Levy



Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney did a fantastic job convincing his supporters that he would win. But when Obama emerged victorious, many Romney followers were forced to face the grim, new reality. And they did not take to it well.

One woman in Oregon was so upset by the election results that she drove her car over her husband because he had not bothered to go out and vote. Actually, Romney won Oregon by a margin of 200,000 votes and one more vote would not have made a difference.

Other Americans swore they would move to Canada (where they would meet liberal politicians who can out-Obama Obama). But the most extreme response to the elections came from those Americans who demanded that they be allowed to secede from the Union.

The White House has admitted that petitions have reached them from residents of all 50 states demanding that they be granted independence. (Last one out, please turn off the lights....) In at least seven states the number of signatures on the petition reached 30,000. That marks sufficient public interest to necessitate an official response from the White

House under protocols established by the Obama administration. Just 150 years after Abraham Lincoln fought a war to prevent states from seceding, there is still talk of leaving the Union!

Actually, talk of leaving the United States began as soon as the president forced Obamacare on America. In response to the highly controversial health care law, Republican Texas Governor Rick Perry made public mention of the perceived right of his state to secede. (The governor's aides later stressed that the statement had not been intended seriously.)

Actually, it might benefit the rest of the US if Southern states are permitted to leave. Those states—the ones most peeved by the federal government's socialist trend—are collecting more in federal aid than they are paying in taxes. Conversely, the states that see it as the government's duty to support the disadvantaged are paying more in taxes than they receive in benefits in return. New York State is just one good example. More about this later.

For now, let's take a look back in time at several fascinating incidents of attempted secession by various groups and locales in America.



Texans have had enough of Democrats ruling.

## Kingdom of Beaver Island

Beaver Island is a small island on Lake Michigan noted chiefly as a vacation center. About 160 years ago the island became a haven for a group of Mormons who established their own kingdom. At least that's how they perceived it.

Beaver Island is the largest island on Lake Michigan, one of the largest lakes in

North America. It is 32 miles from Charlevoix, Michigan, and can be reached only by plane or boat. The island itself measures twelve miles long and six miles wide at its widest. It has a population of 657.

Virtually from the day the movement was founded, the Mormons were subjected to violence and persecution. When the abuse peaked in Illinois in the mid-1840s, many members of the fledgling Mormon sect fled.

James J. Strang led one such group of 300, and he chose Beaver Island as a haven for his followers. They settled the island in 1848. In hindsight it seems that Strang may have felt he could exercise greater control over the group once they were isolated from the mainland.

The so-called "Strangites" grew in number under their chief's able leadership. They created a town which was called St. James after their leader. They also established a main road that traverses the length of Beaver Island, called King's Highway. The town and road remain to this day. The settlers chopped down trees to build homes and established farms to support themselves. Every activity was closely observed by the increasingly dictatorial Strang.

In 1850, apparently satisfied that he had consolidated his power over the group, Strang proclaimed himself their king. Of course, an outright statement that he was king would be interpreted by the already antagonistic US public as an act of rebellion. (In fact, Article I Section 9 of the Constitution expressly forbids the US from granting an inherited title.) Instead, Strang officially declared himself king only of his church. The Strangites carried out a full coronation ceremony, replete with a crown, royal satin robes, a shield and a wooden scepter. They also built Strang a small palace. (The only reminder today of this kingdom is a surviving printing press. The island is also home to a museum that records its unusual history.)

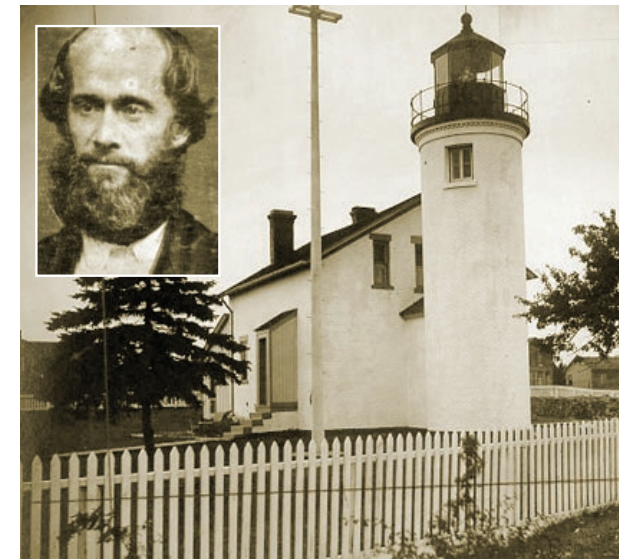
The newly acquired status must have gone to Strang's head (somewhere beneath his crown), because he began to rule with an iron fist. He tried to coerce other islanders to join the Mormon faith. He placed a special tax on these "heathens," confiscated their property and even subjected them to physical attacks.

Strang constantly issued new decrees, including one that specified what clothes his subjects were permitted to wear. When two men failed to obey, Strang ordered them flogged. While recovering from the whippings, the two disaffected men began

plotting an uprising against their dictator.

On June 16, 1856, a US Navy vessel, the *USS Michigan*, entered Beaver Island's harbor. As governor of the island, Strang was invited to board the ship for friendly talks. When Strang arrived at the port, however, the two rebel men ambushed him, shooting him from behind. To escape the vengeance of Strang's followers, the two men took refuge on the naval vessel. They were deposited on a nearby island.

Now that Strang was gone, the native islanders broke out in open rebellion against



Lighthouse built by Strang's Mormons on Beaver Island. Inset: James Strang, leader of the Mormon sect and king of Beaver Island.



View of the lighthouse as it stands today.