

The Pig War: The Border Dispute between the United States and the United Kingdom over a Pig

By Melkisedeck Leon Shine · July 3, 2023

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? June 15, 1859 - The peaceful San Juan Islands, situated between the United States and Canada, were about to become the stage for an unusual conflict. The dispute? A pig! ?

? The San Juan Islands had long been claimed by both the United States and the United Kingdom, with neither side willing to compromise. In the midst of this tension, the seemingly innocent pig, belonging to an Irishman named Lyman Cutlar, would change history.

? Cutlar's pig had a peculiar habit of wandering onto Charles Griffin's garden, a British citizen residing on the island. Griffin had repeatedly complained to Cutlar about the pig's unwelcome visits, but Cutlar, tired of the constant nagging, dismissed the issue.

? One fateful day, the pig, filled with curiosity, walked into Griffin's potato patch once more, ravaging the crop. Enraged, Griffin decided he had finally had enough; he captured the trespassing pig and demanded a sum of \$100 as compensation.

? Cutlar refused to pay such an exorbitant amount. Frustrated, he reported the incident to the American authorities, who swiftly dispatched a gunboat, the USS Massachusetts, to the islands to protect their citizen and assert their claim.

??? Meanwhile, the British Royal Navy, not to be outdone, sent the HMS Tribune to the islands as well, ready to defend their citizen and reinforce their own claim.

? Both sides had drawn a line in the sand, prepared to go to war over a pig! The situation quickly escalated as more troops were deployed, resulting in a tense standoff between the two mighty naval powers.

??? Months passed, and neither side dared to make the first move. International tensions were at an all-time high, and war seemed imminent. Yet, amid this bizarre crisis, cooler heads began to prevail.

? The British and American governments realized the absurdity of the situation. Faced with the prospect of a full-blown conflict over a pig, they decided to seek a peaceful resolution.

?? In 1872, Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany was appointed as an arbitrator to settle the dispute. Finally, on October 21, 1872, the Kaiser awarded the San Juan Islands to the United States.

? Although a pig started it all, the Pig War serves as a testament to the power of diplomacy and the absurdity of conflicts that can arise from the most unexpected

sources. It remains a peculiar footnote in history, reminding us of the unpredictability of human affairs. ??

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