



THE PIG WAR — AND THE — PELICAN GIRLS

21 Extraordinary Stories from
Forgotten American History

JOE CUHAJ

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A generation which ignores history has no past – and no future.

Robert A. Heinlein

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1. The Pig War

The islands of the Pacific northwest are simply spectacular. The windswept rocky and rugged coastline of the archipelago found along the border between the state of Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia are topped with the dark green spires of Douglas fir, western hemlock, and red berry laden madrone trees. The forests are spotted with grassy balds where brilliant wildflowers bloom in season. Harbor seals sun themselves along the shoreline while giant black and white orca whales playfully breach the surface of the surrounding waters.

Today, this idyllic landscape is the perfect vacation getaway for those looking to add a little adventure to their life. Maybe it's kayaking with orcas, hiking through the beautiful red cedar and hemlock forest at Olympic National Park, or maybe just sitting next to the water's edge for a stunning sunset with plenty of peace and quiet. It is a vacationers paradise, but it wasn't always that way. In fact, in the middle of the 19th century, one of the islands in the chain, San Juan Island, came as close as they possibly could to being the site of a full fledge war between two of the world's great nations at the time, and it was all because of an incident concerning a pig.

San Juan Island was first inhabited by the Coast Salish people over 10,000 years ago. The Coast Salish consists of 40 different independent nations that speak over 20 different languages. Europeans first arrived in the region around 1770 with Spanish explorers looking to expand the territory they already held in northern California. It was an area that the British had already laid claim to. The overlapping of claims nearly resulted in a war between the two nations but after negotiations, a peaceful accommodation between was reached and official boundaries were established which lasted until 1819 when Spain relinquished all of their land, transferring its share of the Pacific northwest to the fledgling United States. Here, the U.S. established the city of Seattle while the British created the city of Vancouver.

In 1840, the British government officially added to its empire with the establishment of the Province of Canada, a sprawling collection of provinces along a border north of the still growing United States that stretched from the Atlantic to Pacific Oceans. While most of the territory claimed by Britain for the new province was not in dispute, the San Juan archipelago, which consisted of well over 170 islands, was a different story. The largest of the islands, San Juan, was deemed to be of strategic importance to both the U.S. and Britain due to its location at

along the Salish Sea which directly flowed into the Pacific Ocean. Both countries laid claim to the island and soon after, settlers began moving in.

One of the world's largest trading companies at the time, the *Hudson Bay Company*, which had established a large string of trading posts across the Pacific northwest between the years 1820 and 1850, also laid claim to the island in 1845. Up to this point, both American and British settlers were living together peacefully on the island, but this intermixing of nations made it apparent that this peaceful existence would not last long and it became obvious that a border needed to be established here between the U.S. and Canada.

Both countries sat down at the bargaining table and in short order, hammered out an agreement that became known as the Oregon Treaty. The treaty, which went into effect on June 15, 1846, established the official border between the two countries: a line of latitude, the 49th parallel, would be the demarcation line. For the most part, that agreement was the perfect solution, creating a long, solid border without having to divide rivers and lakes in half. That was true until the border reached the San Juan Islands.

The treaty vaguely specified that the border at the archipelago would be in “the middle of the channel which separates the continent from Vancouver Island, and thence southerly through the middle of the said channel.” The word vaguely hardly describes that passage because if you look on a map, the San Juan Islands have several channels including the Haro and Rosario Straits that wind their way around the myriad of islands. What was the treaty trying to say?

In 1851, the Hudson Bay Company established a salmon-curing station on San Juan Island but in 1853, the U.S. government claimed the entire island as part of its growing Washington Territory. In retaliation, the Hudson Bay Company, led by Charles Griffin, established a large sheep ranch, the *Belle Vue Sheep Farm*, on the island's 1,500 acre coastal prairie that had been previously established and maintained by the Coast Salish people. The farm quickly grew to have over 4,500 head of sheep grazing in the grass by 1859. The farm also boasted 35 horses, 40 cattle, and, most importantly for this story, 40 hogs.

The farm was an enormous success and Americans took notice. Not only did the success of Belle Vue prove that the island had enormous potential for raising livestock, but basic agriculture could thrive there as well and the number of Americans on the island started to grow. By late spring 1859, 18 Americans had staked claims to land on prime Hudson Bay Company pastures. The British government considered these Yanks to be squatters and were illegally trespassing which threatened the peace and tranquility of the island as tensions began to mount between settlers of both nations.

Up until the summer of 1859, Charles Griffin's hogs had enjoyed a good life roaming freely across the island, but in June, one of the hogs crossed into land that was claimed by American Lyman Cutlar. Cutlar found the pig rooting through his potato crop. There was an unsubstantiated report that the two men had a “conversation” about the pig:

Cutler: It was eating my potatoes!

Griffin: Rubbish. It's up to you to keep your potatoes out of my pig.

On June 15th, Cutler shot and killed the pig. Presumably feeling a little remorse (and that's only a presumption), Griffin offered Cutlar \$10 in compensation for the loss of his pig. That didn't appease the hog's owner who was so outraged that he reported the incident to British authorities who in turn threatened to arrest Cutler and deemed all Americans on San Juan Island as trespassers and as such, threatened to forcibly remove them from San Juan Island.

After filing his report, Griffin waited for action to be taken by the British government. Something had to be done to avenge the loss of his pig, like the British ship *HMS Satellite* which was stationed nearby to expel every last Yank from the island. He went to bed that night fully expecting the governor of nearby Vancouver Island, James Douglas, to fulfill his request and wake up to see the Satellite anchored just off the coast, but when he woke up, instead of seeing the Union Jack flying above a ship anchored offshore, he saw the American flag hoisted atop the *USS Massachusetts*. Not taking any chances, the Americans on the island had made their own request, asking the U.S. government for protection and the ship offshore was their response.

Onboard the Massachusetts was the flamboyant Captain George E. Pickett, the same officer who led the famous *Pickett's Charge* at Gettysburg a few years later during the Civil War. On July 27, Pickett and his 64 man Company D, 9th U.S. Infantry landed on the island and made camp just north of the Belle Vue Sheep Farm.

Upon Pickett's landing, Governor Douglas ordered the Royal Navy's frigate *HMS Tribune* with its 31 canons under the command of Captain Geoffrey Phipps Hornby, the *HMS Satellite*, and the *HMS Plumper* to move into position and remove Pickett and his men from the island but not to use force if possible. Over the next month, Hornby was able to reinforce his troops but refused to take any action military action to remove Pickett's army or to remove any Americans.

Pickett did not feel threatened by the increase in British military might and responded by bringing landing an additional 450 men to his encampment on the island. By August, the eight 32 pound canons from the *USS Massachusetts* were removed from the ship and placed in a hastily built redoubt onshore.

The threat of war was escalating exponentially. By this time, the British had a total of five warships situated off the coast and 1,000 marines at the ready. Captain Hornby, still under orders not to use force against the Americans, began showing some muscle as he began demonstrating the might of the British Navy by conducting live drills firing shot from their 52 canons into the island's rocky shores. Tourists from nearby islands and the town of Vancouver on the mainland sailed over to San Juan in droves to watch the spectacle that was unfolding. But Hornby would not directly engage the Americans until the commander of British naval forces in the Pacific, Rear Admiral Lambert Baynes arrived to assess the situation and provide further orders.

As cannon balls were being lobbed at the shoreline by the British navy's canons, the Americans were reinforcing and by August 31 they had 461 soldiers on the island with a total of 22 canons. The situation was quickly getting out of hand and it appeared that it would only take

the slightest provocation, intentional or not, by either the United States and Britain and the two nations would be at war once again 44 years after the end of the War of 1812, only this time it would not be over political disputes or philosophical reasons. This time it would be over the killing of a pig.

With a shooting war seemingly inevitable, cooler heads finally prevailed. Rear Admiral Baynes finally arrived on the island and despite intense pressure from Vancouver Island's governor, he refused to order an attack on the Americans saying, "[I] will not involve two great nations in a war over a squabble about a pig."

At the same time, word of the "Pig War" had made it to the desk of President James Buchanan in Washington. Buchanan dispatched the commander of the U.S. Army, General Winfield Scott, to the scene to negotiate an agreement to end the conflict. Upon Scott's arrival, an agreement was quickly reached that would allow one contingent of soldiers from both sides to remain on the island, one would establish what would be called the *American Camp* on the south side of the island while the other – the *British Camp* – would be established on the northwest side of the island.

The war had been averted and both sides lived together on the island peacefully respecting the agreement for the next twelve years. With the signing of the *Treaty of Washington* in 1871 by the United States and Britain, the issue of who controlled the island was left to an international arbitrator, Prussian King and German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm I, who established a three-man arbitration committee that would settle for the last time the borders between the two nations around islands of the Pacific Northwest. On October 21, 1872, the committee ruled that the boundary between the U.S. and Canada in the San Juan Island chain would be down the center of Haro Strait which meant that San Juan Island would now belong to the U.S.

British troops abandoned their camp on November 25, 1872. American troops left in July 1874. Just over 100 years after Pig War incident, the U.S. government established *the San Juan Island National Historical Park*. Under the management of the National Park Service, visitors to the island today can walk or ride bikes around the island to view the spectacular wildlife and incredible views. They can also visit the sites of the American and British Camps where two great nations nearly went to battle over the killing of a pig.

Footnote To History: The Quasi-War

In 1778, the fledgling United States signed its first international agreements, the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* and the *Treaty of Alliance* with France. When the rebellion against the British monarchy began in the United States three years earlier, the French government under the reign of King Louis XVI sided with the rebellious colonies and began trading with them. The two agreements signed in 1778 took that relationship one step further by officially forming a military alliance between the two nations. They also affirmed that France recognized the U.S. as an independent country and required that the U.S. and France would have to both agree to any peace agreements with the British before they could be signed.

Trouble arose between the two nations following the overthrow of King Louis during the *French Revolution* in 1789, five years after the Revolutionary War ended. The newly formed *French Directory* was angered when the United States signed the *Jay Treaty* with Britain in 1794 which cleared up a series of previously unresolved issues stemming from the Revolution and generally normalized relations between the two nations. One of those unresolved issues was the allowing for the United States to begin trading freely with Britain and its Caribbean colonies.

When the treaty was signed, across the Atlantic Ocean, the newly formed French government was at war with several European countries including Britain. When the United States declared that it would be neutral in the French war against Britain, the French government became incensed. The declaration of neutrality flew in the face of the previous treaty agreed upon by the U.S. and France in 1778.

In retaliation, the French government issued an order that allowed for their naval vessels to seize any American merchant ship they came across effectively treating the United States as an enemy. Between 1796 and 1797, over 300 U.S. merchant ships and their cargo were seized by French privateers. In response, the U.S. refused withheld any payments it owed France accrued during the Revolution.

Tensions began to boil over. In November 1798, one of the first U.S. Navy ships, the *USS Retaliation*, spotted what they thought was a friendly British ship on the horizon, but by the time they got close enough for a good look, the crew realized the ship they spotted was French. By then it was too late to attack and the *Retaliation* became the first U.S. Navy ship to surrender without a single shot being fired by either side. Not long after, the *USS Constitution* encountered the same ship that captured the *Retaliation*. The ship fired off a few shots and the French ship surrendered.

With only 16 ships in the newly minted U.S. Navy, it was quite impressive to think that the American navy captured 86 French privateers in one year. War was never declared between the two nations which earned this event in American history the moniker, the “Quasi-War.” While not a recognized war, the event’s conclusion served end hostilities between the United States, Britain, and France for twelve years and the beginning of the War of 1812.

21. *Come Fly With Me...To The Moon*

In an episode of the hit AMC (American Movie Channel) television series, *Mad Men*, which focuses on a prestigious advertising agency in New York City in the early 1960s, the main character, Don Draper – played by actor Jon Hamm – is seen previewing a marketing campaign for the Hilton Hotel chain to the company’s president, Conrad Hilton.

In the scene, Draper is standing in front of an easel reading each proposed ad, flipping through the cards one by one until he comes to the end of his presentation.

“There is one word that promises the thrill of international travel and the comfort of home,” Draper starts before launching into a series of rhetorical questions which he answers himself. “How do you say ‘ice water’ in Italian? Hilton. How do you say ‘fresh towels’ in Farsi? Hilton. How do you say ‘hamburger’ in Japanese? Hilton.”

Hilton leans back in his chair, takes a deep breath and says, “It’s good. Very good. It’s clever and friendly, yet draws you in. But what about the moon?”

Draper is confused. “Excuse me?”

“There’s nothing about the moon,” Hilton says.

“Well,” Draper says still taken aback from Hilton’s question, “that’s not an actual destination.”

“That wasn’t the point,” Hilton replies. “I said I wanted Hilton on the moon. I couldn’t have been more clear about it.”

Wait. Hold on. Rewind. The moon?

Sounds like something only a writer could think up, right? Well, it wasn’t. While the scene may have been fictional, in 1967, Hilton was actually talking about putting a Hilton Hotel in Earth orbit and on the moon even though it would be another two years before humans orbited our nearest celestial neighbor and another three years before the first men landed on the moon. They even went as far as to have conceptual drawings designed for what he called *the Lunar Hilton*. And while Conrad Hilton first came up with the idea of a futuristic hotel, it would be his son, Barron, that would actually draw up the plans.

Barron Hilton was born in Dallas, Texas, on October 23, 1927, the second oldest of Conrad Hilton’s three children. By this time, the family patriarch was already making a name for himself in the hotel industry having opened his first, the *Mobley Hotel*, in Cisco, Texas, in 1919.

From there, he slowly began building his empire by buying more and more hotels one after the other throughout Texas in the years that followed.

The family eventually moved to Los Angeles where Conrad opened another hotel called the Townhouse Hotel. When young Barron became a teenager, his father gave him his first hotel related job - parking cars at the hotel.

From an early age, Barron yearned to fly and at the age of 17, he obtained a pilot license. Before fully immersing himself in the family business, the young Hilton went off to war serving as a Navy photographer during World War II. Upon his discharge, Barron made a name for himself in business acquiring the *Vita-Pakt Citrus Company*, founded the first aircraft leasing company, *Air Finance*, and created the *Carte Blanche* credit card company. Hilton also became the owner of the Los Angeles Chargers football team which later became the San Diego Chargers when it moved to the southern California city.

In 1954, Barron Hilton was named the vice president of the hotel chain and in 1966, he was offered the position of president and CEO of Hilton Hotels and would succeed his father. Selling his ownership of the Chargers, Barron Hilton took over the reins of the chain. The company saw remarkable growth over the ensuing years when Barron allowed the Hilton brand to be franchised.

The idea for a space based Hilton actually began years earlier when rumors about such an endeavor began spreading through the press in 1957 after Conrad Hilton held an event at his swanky Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago. The extravaganza featured a floor show with astronaut themed dancers high stepping through across a stage decked out with futuristic space-related backdrops.. Newspapers began circulating the rumor that the elder Hilton was going big with a moon-based Hilton. The *Chicago Suburbanite Economist* wrote of the event saying that the dancers were prancing through a “plush Lunar Hilton.” In 1963, *Cosmopolitan Magazine* did a profile of the elder Hilton and wrote, “It won’t be long before our astronauts land on the moon and immediately behind them will be Connie Hilton with his plans for the Lunar Hilton Hotel.”

Fast forward back to 1967 when Barron, who was now fully in charge of the chain, told the Wall Street Journal that he could see a Lunar Hilton being constructed in his lifetime. While Barron knew that such a vision would take years if not decades or more to become a reality, he went ahead and ordered drawings and sketches made up of what his vision could look like.

For the Earth orbiting Hilton, Barron envisioned a circular space station design that closely resembled the one that famed rocket scientist Wernher Von Braun presented on an episode of the *Disneyland* television show titled *Man in Space*. The ring would spin slowly in space giving occupants the feeling of gravity. The hotel would have fourteen levels and accommodate twenty four guests who could stay for a short holiday or just spend a night before heading to the moon.

The Lunar Hilton was much more ambitious. It would be built 30-feet under the lunar surface to stabilize the extreme temperatures on the moon. There would be three floors: the lower level would hold the mechanics that keep oxygen flowing through the complex as well as electrical, heating, etc. The second level would consist of two 400-foot long corridors that would

be connected by air locks and accommodate 100 people. The upper level near the surface of the moon would house the main lobby, dining room, and the cocktail lounge. When presenting the Lunar Hilton concept to the American Astronomical Institute in 1967, Barron told those gathered, “If you think we are not going to have a cocktail lounge, you don’t know Hilton.”

To promote the hotel chain and to get people excited about what the future held for the hotel in the not-too-distant future, Hilton had some swag made up for customer – mock room keys with the words “Lunar Hilton” emblazoned on them that would be handed out to guests when they checked into their Earth bound hotel rooms. They also printed and distributed promotional reservation cards that offered single, double, or cloud suite rooms and the option of taking an “Intergalactic Express” ride to the moon, all with the caveat that arrival dates “must be after 1980.”

Of course, the dream of a Lunar Hilton never saw the light of day. But hold on a second. A new private company, *Voyager Space*, is one of several companies contracted by NASA to launch new generations of space stations into Earth orbit that will replace the International Space Station when it is finally decommissioned in 2030. The company’s *Starlab* space station will provide greater opportunities for scientists and researchers to explore new manufacturing processes in pharmaceuticals, biology, and more. Of course, these researchers will need a place to lay their heads after an exhausting day at work. Enter Hilton Hotels who has signed an agreement to build crew accommodation and communal areas aboard *Starlab*. While not the same hotel envisioned by Conrad and Barron Hilton, it will be the first step toward that goal.

The dream of an orbiting or building a moon based Hilton Hotel depends on the ability to send average, everyday people reliably and safely into space. On July 21, 2021, this next step in human space travel was taken when billionaire Jeff Bezos successfully launched the first all civilian crew of private citizens into space. The fifteen minute sub-orbital flight, much like those taken by NASA’s Mercury astronauts in the early 1960s, included Bezos, his brother Mark, Oliver Daemen (a paying customer), and Wally Funk. Funk was one of the *Mercury 13* or *FLATs* (First Lady Astronaut Trainees) who took the same physical and mental tests that the male Mercury astronauts were subjected to in the 1960s, but were denied the opportunity to fly into space for a variety of reasons, one of which for simply being a woman.

During a post-flight press conference, Bezos was asked by reporters how it felt. “Wonder how it felt?” he excitedly replied. “OH MY GOD! My expectations were high and they were dramatically exceeded. The most profound piece of it for me was looking out at the Earth and looking at the Earth’s atmosphere. Every astronaut, everybody who has been up into space, say that it changes them. They are kind of amazed and awestruck by the Earth and its beauty but also its fragility. And I can vogue for that.”

It was the opening of a new era. Commercial space travel was becoming a reality. Granted, the flight of *New Shepard* was only a brief 15-minute ride into the lower reaches of space and the crew was only weightless for three minutes total, it was still a monumental achievement – civilians had been launched into space by a private company. Steps were being taken to make spaceflight as commonplace as flying in an airliner.

Upon landing in a west Texas desert, the debate began: should private industry be allowed to conduct such trips into space? After all, this is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world – climbing aboard what could ostensibly be called a giant stick of dynamite that puts the crew, engineers, and spectators at risk should anything go wrong. On the second flight of the New Shepard, actor William Shatner, who is best known for his role as the captain of the *USS Enterprise* in the television series *Star Trek*, rode that same rocket into space. Could you imagine the outcry if Captain Kirk had been blown up?

But as with all new ventures, there are two sides to the story. Yes, it is a dangerous industry that should be regulated to keep everyone safe, but then again, isn't this how the airline industry began? Visionary inventors and eccentric billionaires pushing the envelope of air travel to make it accessible first to the wealthy and then to the general public?

Decades before Bezos and Virgin Galactic's owner Richard Branson (who is also building a commercial spaceship) dreamed of sending civilians to the stars and about the same time Barron Hilton began dreaming of a Hilton Hotel on the moon, another company was already making plans to send average, everyday people to a destination where "no one had gone before" – the moon. Well, that's not quite right. They were not really planning on sending travelers to the moon, but it became quite the marketing scheme. What started as a small joke by a random newspaper reporter in Austria quickly became a marketing campaign for the largest worldwide airline, and as with Barron Hilton's dream of building a lunar hotel, it happened in the early days of the space age in 1964.

Sometime during 1964, an Austrian journalist, Gerhard Pistor, walked into a Viennese travel agency to reserve a seat on a very special flight. Pistor calmly stepped up to the travel agent and requested a reservation on a flight to the moon. Needless to say, the agent was quite surprised by Pistor's request. Knowing full well that there were no such flights and none planned in the near future, the ticket agent dutifully performed their job and sent the journalist's request to the Pan American Airlines reservation office.

At the time, Pan American – or simply Pan Am – was the principal international airline of the United States. The first routes flown by the airline began in 1927 when their fleet of small airplanes would fly mail from Key West, Florida to Havana, Cuba. One year later, and under the technical direction of famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, the airline began expanding its routes and added passenger service to Buenos Aires then to Chili and Argentina. By 1937, Pan Am began trans-Atlantic routes.

From that moment on, Pan American World Airlines, as it was now called, became the leader in international air travel which had expanded even further to include around-the-world routes. By the 1970s, however, airline deregulations allowed other airlines to begin international service and Pan Am started facing financial difficulties. By the late 1970s, the company tried in vain to get back to its roots by introducing domestic service in the U.S. The company even went as far as to sell its international routes to other airlines to infuse much needed cash into the business but it was too late. The writing was on the wall and the company filed for bankruptcy in 1991. But throughout the 1960s, Pan Am was the go to for international travel so a request for a

ticket to the moon was almost, and I stress almost, reasonable. That is except for the fact that no one had flown to the moon yet.

After asking for a ticket to the moon, Pistor returned home disappointed (one would imagine) that he couldn't take his out-of-this-world vacation. Two weeks after his request, Pistor was surprised when he received a letter from Pan Am informing him that his reservation had been accepted and that he could expect the first flight to the moon to occur sometime in the year 2000. As it turns out, Pistor's request gave the airline fodder to create a brilliant marketing scheme, and while it was just a gimmick, it kept the airlines name in front of the public's eyes. And with that, the *Pan Am First Moon Flights Club* was born. Soon, people were flooding the airline with requests for a reservation.

To join the club, you simply had to send a letter to the company with your name and address. In return, you would receive an official card free of charge in the mail. The cards were sequentially numbered so that the holders would be prioritized in the order they were received when flights were finally available and ticket reservations could be made. Letters accompanying the card made it clear that "fares are not fully resolved and may be out of this world." Oh, and the cards were non-transferable.

Now you are probably thinking that this was a clever ploy by Pan Am to get names onto their contact list for promotional use, but representatives of Pan Am at the time staunchly defended the program saying that flying people to the moon will eventually happen and the airline would be the first to do it. Reading between the lines – it was a ploy to get names into their sales database.

In 1968, the First Moon Flights Club had an unexpected boost from an incredibly successful science fiction movie, Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. As the movie begins, a spaceship named Orion III is shown slowly approaching a rotating space station shuttling people to orbit from Earth. Emblazoned on the side of the spacecraft was the iconic blue and white Pan Am logo. The spacecraft and the Pan Am logo was also immortalized on the famous poster created for the movie by painter Robert McCall.

As mentioned earlier, Pan Am experienced a fiscal crisis and went bankrupt in 1991. Before that time, however, over 90,000 people had become members of the First Moon Flights Club. The list included the likes of former U.S. senator and presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, California governor and future U.S. president Ronald Reagan, and journalist Walter Cronkite. And while the cards can no longer be redeemed (sorry, there still are no scheduled commercial flights to the moon), the cards have gained value both monetarily as a collector's item and with the memories this piece of early space history has left behind.