MACKINAC JOURNAL

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The Great State of Superior

By Rick Wiles
The Great State of “SUPERIOR”
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The sparsely populated northern counties of the state of Michigan have always had a love-hate relationship with downstate political ruling interests. The dominate center of the state's population is in the southern quarter of Michigan, on both its western, and eastern borders. Draw a straight line east, from Muskegon to Port Huron, and you will find that above that line there are only 500,000 individuals, out of the total state population in 2010, of 9,800,000.

However, even before Michigan was made a state, in January of 1837, there had been an effort to have the area of the Upper Peninsula, along with Wisconsin, and a part of Minnesota, become its own state of Huron (in the 1820s). Another possible name suggested for this new addition to the Union was the State of Chippewa. The population of this area at that time was too small to even form its own territorial govern-
Less population means less governmental representation, and this is especially true in Michigan's state capital of Lansing. Most people have always resided in the bottom third of the Lower Peninsula. Even after the iron ore and copper fields of the Upper Peninsula were discovered, and the small towns of Marquette, Houghton, and Hancock became overnight metropolitan centers, the Lower section of the state dominated. In 1850, Michigan had a population of 397,000 people, with most individuals, 390,000, living mostly in the lower third of the Lower Peninsula. By 1900, the population of Michigan was 2,400,000, with only 260,000 living in the Upper Peninsula.

Almost 30% of the land mass of Michigan is above the Straits of Mackinac, but only 3% of the state's population resided there in 2010. There are 15 out of 83 counties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The cities of Marquette, Sault Ste. Marie and Escanaba had a com-
bined 2010 census of 48,000, as compared to the cities of Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Flint with a total population over 1,000,000 alone. Four Michigan state legislators in the Michigan House of Representatives come from the Upper Peninsula, out of a total of 110. Two Michigan State Senators come from the Upper Peninsula out of 38. Many times in the past there would be only one State Senator, and only one or two State House of Representatives members from across the Straits of Mackinac.

The true boom years of the Upper Peninsula were the decades of 1870 through 1920 when the mining industry was at its peak. The population rose from 43,700 in 1870 to 332,500 in 1920, with over 210,000 living in the mining counties of the western sections of the Upper Peninsula. Even prior to those boom years an effort to secede from the state of Michigan to form a new state had begun in 1858. A political convention to decide on succession was held in Ontonagon, Michigan in late March of 1858. The New York Times April 6, 1858, carried an article titled:
Seven Million Fertile Acres in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan
A New State—Ontonagon.—The prolific Northwest is apparently about to give birth to another member of the American family of States. We may expect soon to “welcome the advent of a little stranger” on the borders of our greatest lake. It is proposed, in short, that the portion of Michigan lying west of Lake Michigan, and known as the “Upper Peninsula.” shall be joined with the northern part of Wisconsin, bordering upon Lake Superior, the two to constitute a new State, bearing the title of Ontonagon.

This movement originates in the right quarters. Michigan passed legislative resolves last year recommending the project, and similar resolutions are now about to be adopted by the Legislature of Wisconsin.

The Constitution of the United States provides that “no new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdiction of any other State, nor any State be formed by the junction of two or more States, or parts of States, without the consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned, as well as of the Congress.” It will in this case only remain to obtain the consent of Congress, that of “the States concerned” being proffered in advance.

Ontonagon is to have for its southern boundary a line drawn from the Menominee River, near its mouth on Green Bay, westerly till such line intersects the western boundary of Wisconsin, near Hudson on the St. Croix River. This line will not be far from the 45th parallel of latitude.

The new State will thus contain 40,000 square miles, nearly equal to the area of New-York. It will embrace the entire southern coast of Lake Superior, and include the rich mineral region which stretches along that vast inland sea. There is already a population of 70,000, which is rapidly increasing, in the territory referred to. These people are anxious to have a government of their own, finding themselves cut off by the peculiarity of their location and pursuits from communication with Michigan or Wisconsin. Unless Congress should interpose objections, which cannot reasonably be apprehended, we see no cause why the new “State of Ontonagon” should not speedily take her place as an independent member of the Union.
Proponents of the late 1880s and 1890s secessionist movement stated that the Upper Peninsula had become a mineral resource powerhouse (a mineral empire) with a population of 180,000 and growing. At that time of history, the U.P.'s population was higher that the states of Delaware, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and even Nevada. Critics of Lansing said their U.P. was the victim of bad policies coming from the state capital, and they were hindering the economic progress of the northern region. By the year 1897, a proposal called for the U.P.'s 15 counties to join with the upper portions of the state of Wisconsin for a new State of Superior. This was reported in a October 3, 1897 Washington Post newspaper article which read, "The latest proposition is to take that portion of Michigan which lies west of Lake Michigan, add to it a slice of Wisconsin, and convert the territory into the new State of Superior."

In 1909, Sault Ste. Marie, The Sault News, owner and publisher Chase Osborn began a campaign to place all Upper Peninsula resident only candidates on the ballot for Michigan state and national offices. Osborn believed this would help create a political advantage for the U.P. Osborn followed his own lead and ran for, and was elected, Governor of Michigan in the 1910 November election. He was to be the only person so far elected to the office of Michigan governor from the
Editor Horace Greeley saw the addition of a northern new state as a way to help the growing cause of the abolition anti-slavery movement.

Even prior to the idea of a new State of Ontonagon, in September of 1851, according to Upper Peninsula author, and historian, James Carter, the Sault Ste. Marie based newspaper, Lake Superior Journal, editorialized for the creation of a separate state to be named "North Michigan." The paper's editor stated, "Upper Peninsula residents had not a single feeling in common with people below." North Michigan would join North Dakota, and North Carolina, and West Virginia as "directional" states. The in early 1857, a petition was submitted to the Michigan legislature asking that it allow the Upper Peninsula to "retrocede" from the state of Michigan back to the United States government as a new territory, and eventually a new state. The new state name bandied about was, "Superior."
The petition went no-where, and the next action was for the call of the State of Ontonagon. Then, the American Civil War put a damper on any calls for secession in Michigan. In late December of 1868, another regional convention of Upper Peninsula secessionists met, this time in Houghton, Michigan. The group in attendance drew up a list of grievances that were then presented to the Michigan legislature, but, once again, was ignored. Those grievances included:

1. Slow Upper Peninsula mail service
2. Heavy tolls levied on ships passing through Sault Ste. Marie locks
3. Mismanagement and graft by the administration at the Sault locks
4. Inadequate Upper Peninsula roads
5. Call for better regulation of the mining industry
6. Higher local taxes on mining interests
7. Creation of an Upper Peninsula mental asylum
8. Creation of a mining school in the Upper Peninsula
9. Placement of a state penal institution in the Upper Peninsula
10. Creation of a state college or university in the Upper Peninsula
During the 1870s and 1880s, author James Carter points out that there were those in the Upper Peninsula who opposed separating from Lower Michigan. One vocal opponent to secession was the Portage Lake Mining Gazette, located in the Keweenaw Peninsula. It ran a July 30, 1874 editorial stating:

"The Northern Peninsula could not afford the costs of a territorial government and then a state government... the Upper Peninsula in the eyes of the paper was getting fair treatment from Lansing..."

Finally, in late 1881, the Detroit, Mackinac & Marquette Railroad was completed connecting the Upper and Lower Peninsula by rail service. Steam engines and cars would be transported across the Mackinac Straits by ferry boats. Later, in 1888, Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad was completed giving rail service to and from the western end of the Upper Peninsula all the way east to Sault Ste. Marie and south to St. Ignace. It was soon after that another campaign for independent statehood arose with the call for a State of Superior once more.
Proponents of the late 1880s and 1890s secessionist movement stated that the Upper Peninsula had become a mineral resource powerhouse (a mineral empire) with a population of 180,000 and growing. At that time of history, the U.P's population was higher that the states of Delaware, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and even Nevada. Critics of Lansing said their U.P. was the victim of bad policies coming from the state capital, and they were hindering the economic progress of the northern region. By the year 1897, a proposal called for the U.P's 15 counties to join with the upper portions of the state of Wisconsin for a new State of Superior. This was reported in a October 3, 1897 Washington Post newspaper article which read, "The latest proposition is to take that portion of Michigan which lies west of Lake Michigan, add to it a slice of Wisconsin, and convert the territory into the new State of Superior."

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Upper Peninsula. While in office, Osborn also took up the banner for Theodore Roosevelt's election as a Bull Moose Party candidate for the United States Presidency. Osborn served only one two-year term.

During Governor Osborn's tenure, the Upper Peninsula Development Bureau was born to promote the U.P. region as "The Cloverland." It was touted as the next United States potential agricultural paradise. Soon followed was a renewed call for separation, secession from the Lower Peninsula. This time, it was to be called the "State of Cloverland."

Chase Salmon Osborn - Michigan's only U.P. Governor, 1910-1912
There is Room in Old Glory For Another Star

Andrews says:

I am not the leader of any chosen people, nor the arch prophet of the Upper Peninsula.

I am not a candidate for any political office of any sort.

I want to work in the ranks of the loyal company who believe in Clover-Land, who love it and want the world to know it and in.

I see in this campaign for separate statehood a great opportunity to call the attention of the country to our rich and growing section, endowed in a score of ways beyond many of the older states of the Union.
The Upper Peninsula of Michigan Should Be a Separate State

There is Room In Old Glory For Another Star.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan, our “Cleverland,” should be a separate state with United States of America.

The Upper Peninsula comprises nearly one-third of all the area of the great State of Michigan, the largest state, excepting Georgia, east of the Mississippi River.

The Upper Peninsula of no part matches the lower peninsula, but the former is bounded by thousands miles of lake shore, touching states of the five Great Lakes and 140 miles of border line adjoining the State of Wisconsin.

The net growth of the population of Michigan residing in the Upper Peninsula was nearly one-fourth of all the state taxes.

There is no reason under the broad canopy of heaven why this great region of the Upper Peninsula, rich in every natural gift needed to nurture beyond an ocean of these United States a garden spot of agricultural opportunity, a center of industrial and climatic beauty, should not have its rightful place among the states and union, adding another star to the grand old flag and taking into consideration all the rights, titles, and privileges which are its heritage and its own due.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan
Our “Cleverland”

THERE IS ROOM IN OLD GLORY FOR ANOTHER STAR

“Cleverland,” the new illustrated magazine of “The State of Superior”

Edited by Roger M. Agnew of Muskegon.

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Not much of any secession talk was generated during the 1920s on into the early 1950s. Some State of Superior flags were flown at various spots in the Upper Peninsula, but no real effort to separate the two Peninsula's was undertaken. The Mackinac Bridge was completed in November of 1957, and the International Bridge was then completed at the two Sault Ste. Marie cities in 1962. There was a 1959 call for the 16 countries of northern Wisconsin joining with the 15 counties of the U.P to form a new state with a capital city close to Iron Mountain. Ironwood, Michigan native Theodore Albert, a practicing attorney, went so far as to file a "Complaint of Divorce" in federal court asking for the separation of the U.P. from the Lower Peninsula. In his petition, Albert cited "acts of nonsupport, cruel and inhuman treatment," the Lower Peninsula has heated rest stop bathrooms, while the U.P. was only given outhouses.
In the year of 1962, two Upper Peninsula business men, each from the opposite end of region, proposed secession, along with the idea of legalizing gambling in the new 51st state. They founded the St. Ignace-based Upper Peninsula Independence Association with the vision of creating a Midwest Las Vegas in the U.P. They believed gaming would draw Canadian visitors and those midwesterners from the cities of Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and beyond. A petition to create the State of Superior was circulated and over 20,000 signatures were collected, however, that was 36,000 short of what was needed to create a ballot referendum in the state of Michigan.

The opposition to the gambling aspect of the proposed new “State of Superior” was strong. Local civic groups and churches were adamantly opposed of any new form of gambling, and that eventually killed the 1960s proposal. Efforts to create a news state continued into the mid-1970s, with residents of the both the Upper Peninsula, and northern Wisconsin. Many people in each part of the two states were still resentful of
Hope For Vote In Spring

Group Revives Drive To Secede From Michigan

By JIM IRWIN
Associated Press Writer
ROCK, Mich. (AP) —
Backers of no-frills statehood for northern Michigan, bankrolled by income from bake sales, hope to put the proposal — as old as the state itself — before the region's voters by late spring, an organizer says.

"It's not going to be like it is now," said Jenny Vallier, 1979, hopes to collect enough petition signatures to force a vote on whether the Upper Peninsula and 21 counties in the northern Lower Peninsula should form a new state, tentatively named Superior, Mrs. Vallier said Thursday.

Authority members and their sympathizers oppose Michigan's tax and regulatory policies, which they say is recruiting their central Upper Peninsula.

The authority also would consider building a "floating capital" that could be towed from one location to another "to bring government to the people, rather than people to the government," she said.

The authority so far has 10,000 petition signatures and needs 26,000 more to hold "a special election for sula annexed to the new state in exchange for ceding a strip of land west of Lake Erie, including Toledo, to Ohio.

The authority is organizing a caravan of cars and campers that will crisscross the Upper Peninsula in a bid for more signatures starting in about two weeks, Mrs. Vallier said, adding that the
perceived tax drains, and other slights from their downstate neighbors. It made more sense to them to join to form a new state with the name of “North Michigan” once again surfacing.

-Dominic Jacobetti, known as the Godfather of the U.P, King Jake, and “Puga” (Poohga) to his friend was the longest ever serving Michigan House of Representatives legislator in the history of Michigan. He represented the House District 108 from 1954-1992 and then the new 109th District from 1992 until his unexpected death in 1994. During the 1970’s, Jacobetti began talking openly about his Upper Peninsula not receiving its fair share from Lansing. In 1976, Jacobetti led a revived movement in the Upper Peninsula to break away from the Lower Michigan and become its
Dominic Jacobetti - "Godfather of the U.P."
own state. His call for separate statehood was fueled by the notion that "downstate interests" were a hindrance to the progression and growth of the Upper Peninsula. Once again, the idea of legalizing gambling to help support the creation of the new state was put forth. Jacobetti revived the 1962 idea of creating a "mini Las Vegas" to bolster tourism which would bring in revenue, and lower the need for local taxes. In January of 1976, Jacobetti asked for and received a ruling from Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley as to the legality of secession. The January 23, 1976 Escanaba Daily News reported:

"Attorney General Frank Kelley said it was legally
possible for the Upper Peninsula to withdraw from the rest of the state and form a separate state. But, he said, it would take approval by the state legislature (both houses), a vote by the residents of the Upper Peninsula, and an Act of Congress to complete the move."

Jacobetti also stated that he wanted to be the first Governor of the State of Superior, and that due to his idea of legalized gambling, no Upper Peninsula resident would have to pay property or income taxes. He also stated at the time, "... within five years of the establishment of the State of Superior, the Lower Michigan would be asking us for a loan ... They can have control and ownership of the Mackinac Bridge but we will have the toll booths and revenue on the U.P. side..." By 1976, the population of the U.P. was 340,000 living within 10,000,000 acres of land.

Then in May of 1979, the call for a 51st state was taken up by the Tip of the Mitt's own Boyne City resident, Karl Waldner. The Escanaba Daily Press reported that Associated Press Writer Ron Dzwonkowski had written a poem about Waldner's secessionist effort.

"Karl Waldner took a map
And gave his home state several whacks
When he saw what he had done,
The United States had 51."
Split-Michigan Movement Still Alive And Growing
Want UP, Northern LP Made Into 51st State

By RON DZWONKOWSKI
Associated Press Writer

Karl Waldner took a map
And gave his homestate several whacks.
When he saw what he had done,
The United States had 51.
The split-Michigan movement is still alive. It's just shifted 60 miles south, settling below the Mackinac Bridge in Boyne City where Karl Waldner has declared himself the "provisional council of the independent "State of Superior."

Upper Peninsula residents have talked for years about breaking off from the Lower Peninsula and forming the nation's 51st state, to be called Superior.
Waldner, near as can be determined, is the first to propose that Superior also take in the 31 northern-adjacent counties of the Lower Peninsula.
"It just makes a lot of sense," says the 56-year-old semi-retired architectural field worker who moved north from Detroit's suburbs 54 years ago. "It's a natural process of peeling off for more effective government."
Waldner was now calling himself the "provisional counsel of the independent State of Superior. In an interview with author Dzwonkowski, he stated, "The Upper Peninsula residents have been talking about this for years ... It just makes a lot of sense. It's a natural process of peeling off for more effective government ... Right now we are just Lansing's ghetto, and if you look at map ... you recognize that the counties just below the bridge are in the same backwater as the U.P. counties." Waldner took up the challenge of a petition drive to place the idea of separation on the ballot.

It took Waldner, then 62 and a semi-retired architect, until March of 1985 to have 20,000 referendum signatures. However, he needed 36,000 before the petition could be considered. By that time, Waldner was referring to himself as executive director of the Interim New State Authority. In a March 5, 1985 Detroit Free Press interview, Waldner said his aim was to make "Michigan's Forgotten Area," the 51st state. His idea was to carve out the State Superior from the 15 U.P. counties and 21 of the Lower Peninsula counties above M-55.

Waldner's early 1980s effort was supported by Rock, Michigan resident Jenny Vallier. She became president of the New State Authority group and helped lead the Superior campaign in the U.P. Vallier stated in a 1984 interview printed in the Ludington Daily Press (March 30, 1984) the new State of Superior would draft its own constitution, elect its own governor, elect its own
members to a one-house and part-time legislature, elect its own judges who would be governed by an advisory board made up by a majority of lay people. "Our new state would collect no state income tax, no inheritance, or single business tax, and would be required to hold a popular vote before any new tax could be proposed."

Over the 225+ years of the United States under the laws of the United States Constitution, five separate states have been carved out of existing states. Vermont came from a section of New York, Kentucky from a section of Virginia, and Maine from Massachusetts. The last time a state was divided to form a news state was in 1862, during the American Civil War, when the Union backing western section of Virginia separated from the rebelling state of Virginia.

Before the 1985 51st statehood petition drive suspended its efforts. It was largely spurred on by the introduction of the Michigan House Bill No. 6115 on March 8, 1978. Upper Peninsula legislator Dominic Jacobetti had introduced the bill stating that:

"It would separate the Upper Peninsula from the existing State of Michigan; it would adjust certain boundary lines between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas; and would provide for a referendum."
The proposed bill would take effect pending ratification of most the qualified electors in the Upper Peninsula at the next general or special election. Though Jacobetti’s bill never made it to a vote in the full Michigan House of Representatives. Back in November of 1975, a straw vote on secession had taken place in Marquette and Iron Mountain. Though the vote was only advisory, the secession proposal when down to defeat by the Marquette voters 1,842 no, to 770 yes votes. In Iron Mountain, the vote was 1,601 no to only 745 yes votes. By the separatist movement and the idea of Superiorland did not, and has not died.

In 2012, Marquette County’s Board of Commissioners, frustrated with Lansing’s cuts in revenue sharing, tax law changes, and unfunded mandates, called for the revival of “North Michigan” secession. They included in their plan for separatism the northern counties of the Lower Peninsula. In 2013, according to the Oakland Press, Chad Stevens, of the Northern Michigan Liberty Alliance, and backer of the Free State Superior Project, was advocating once again, the creation of the State of Superior. He was quoted as stating:

“We don’t matter that much to Lansing, since we don’t live in the lower third of Michigan... Government officials from ‘Up North’ have many great ideas, but they are ignored in Lansing... for every $1.06 the Upper Peninsula residents send to Lansing, they only receive 96 cents in benefits... By forming a new state, residents could take a 10% tax cut, while keeping the same level of government...”

However, a study done in 1975 by then Northern
Michigan University president John Jemeric and reported on by Marquette Mining Journal editor Jim Tretheway, found that the four colleges in the Upper Peninsula had a combined annual budget cost of $37 million (in 1975 dollars), and that the 300,000 U.P. residents at that time were paying only $100 million in yearly taxes. "When we looked at the operating budgets for schools and hospitals, plus capital expenditures and road costs, plus welfare costs, a separate U.P. state was just economically unfeasible."

The State of Superior may not be the 51st state. There are "free state projects" going on in 2015 in California, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Colorado, and New Hampshire. The history of forming states in the
NORTHERN MICHIGAN LIBERTY ALLIANCE

Free State Superior Project

Chad Stevens-Sault Ste. Marie
United States started even before the country was formed under the laws of a constitution. Back in 1786, the eight western counties of eastern Tennessee wanted to create the State of Franklin. In 1941, a group of northern California and Oregon counties wanted to secede from their states and form the State of Jefferson. In southeastern and western Kentucky, as well as northern Tennessee, there existed an unofficial British colony prior to the American Revolution that wanted to become the colony of Transylvania. For almost a year from May of 1775 through June of 1776, the Colony of Transylvania was in existence. Organizers even framed a government under what was known as the Transylvania Compact. This plan for government included executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Richard Wiles is a retired history and reading development instructor at Petoskey High School and a retired graduate research instructor for Spring Arbor University. His research papers are filed at the Petoskey Public Library and include: Summerset-The Robison Murder Case, Fireball in the Sky-The B-52 Crash, and The Woodland Indian National Park Wiles holds a Bachelor's degree in history from the University of Toledo, a Master's degree in reading development-psychology from Michigan State University, and an Educational Specialist degree in community leadership from Central Michigan University. He can be reached through the Mackinac Journal.
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