

The Crown of America?

History teaches us that the early Americans despised all monarchies, and it would have been absurd to think of actually putting into place a monarchy for the United States. Yet, such monarchists existed at the very beginning. Known of course, were the "Patriots" and the "Tories" but there was another minority who favored independence for the 13 colonies but still thought that a monarchy was the way to go; the tried and true method of government, well known for centuries. That idea accepted, then who exactly was it that might have become the first monarch of a 'United Kingdom of North America'? Here is a list of the possible candidates discussed, by some at least, at the time:

1. HRH Prince Charles Edward Stuart, aka "Bonnie Prince Charlie", aka King Charles III to loyal Jacobites. A four-man delegation made up of 2 brothers from Pennsylvania, a lawyer from New York and a gentleman from Maryland made the trip across the water to offer the crown of America to the "Young Pretender" in Florence, Italy in 1782. The Prince reportedly turned down the invitation.

Prince Charles had the benefit of being a natural enemy of the Hanoverian King George and the reputation of a romantic figure from the 1745 Battle of Culloden, but his years in exile left that reputation somewhat tarnished. Probably most importantly he was also a Catholic and the colonial rebels considered even granting the basic civil rights and religious tolerance to Canadian Catholics one of the "Intolerable Acts". He also had no male heir other than his brother Prince Henry the Cardinal Duke of York -something America at that time would never have stood for.

2. HRH Prince Heinrich of Prussia, the younger brother of the famous Prussian warrior-king Frederick the Great. In 1786 Nathaniel Gorham and Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben approached Alexander Hamilton (known to be favorably inclined toward monarchy) on the idea of Prince Heinrich becoming President, or even King, of the United States. Prussia had been one of the first European nations to recognize the USA and the countries were on friendly terms, nonetheless, the idea was dropped before Prince Heinrich knew about it.

Prince Henry of Prussia's major drawback was that he was a Prussian -one of the most strict, absolutist monarchies in Europe and it would be hard to imagine, for all of their "Enlightenment" talk, a brother of Frederick the Great being a constitutional monarch

3. HRH Prince Edward, Duke of Kent and Strathearn, the fourth son of America's archenemy King George III was actually suggested by some of the colonials still somewhat attached to Great Britain. The Duke of Kent had the advantage of being still quite young and thus more adaptable to becoming an American monarch, yet this was an idea that went nowhere, and it is impossible to imagine that if it had even been made George III would have ever allowed it.

Nonetheless, it is curious to try to imagine his daughter, the great Queen Victoria, as an American. the Duke of Kent, but he would have suffered from simply being a son of George III and the King, as stated, would surely never have allowed his son to reign over rebel colonies.

4. General George Washington, Continental Army, America's first President and probably the only man in history who actually could have been King of the United States had he so desired. The idea was presented to the general in the famous Newburgh Letter by the Irish-born veteran of the British army Colonel Lewis Nicola, a member of the Society of the Cincinnati. He wrote to Washington on behalf of his fellow army officers, disgruntled at the mismanagement of the Continental Congress and proposed to make Washington King of the United States with the support of the army. Cincinnatus like, Washington refused

His heritage linked in ages past to the family of the Scottish King, George Washington would have stood the best chance, he was an aristocratic sort of fellow who thought shaking hands beneath the dignity of the President, but of course he was not royal, not terribly inclined toward monarchy and as he himself admitted later on, he had no male heir either and by his own admission would have been an unsuitable monarch.