THE ROLE JOHN CHARLES FREMONT ENJOYED
IN THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS OF 1856, 1860, 1864

BY

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate the efforts put forth in this work to my mother, whose loving encouragement and inspiration have made its completion possible.
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Chapter I

FREMONT'S EARLY LIFE; EXPLORATIONS
AND SUBSEQUENT RISE TO FAME

John Charles Fremont was born on January 21, 1813, in Savannah, Georgia. There have been doubts expressed as to the legitimacy of his birth. Fremont's mother had been Anne Beverley Whiting, the youngest daughter among the twelve children of Colonel Thomas Whiting, a large landowner of Gloucester County, and at one time a leading member of the House of Burgesses in Virginia.¹

At an early age she had wedded a man named Pryor, who was twenty years her senior. Young, gay and full of life, was it not inevitable that the future mother of the man who was to become internationally famous as the "Pathfinder" should, when neglected by her husband, fall desperately in love with the dashing John Fremont?

We are told that the father of John Charles Fremont was dark, finely featured, and of a slender

¹ A. Nevins, Fremont, Pathmarker of the West, p. 3.
nature. His life had been packed with adventure.
Born in a village near Lyons, France, he had migrated early to America.²

The handsome Fremont and young Mrs. Pryor soon left for Charleston, but there economic distress with all of its associated miseries enveloped them. Fremont was engaged in private tutoring at the time and was able only to garner a few dollars from it. This coupled with Fremont's restive nature was the reason why the two young people, still very much in love, set off for Savannah.

There is no evidence of a divorce being granted to Mrs. Pryor terminating her first marriage before the birth of John Charles Fremont. Fremont was illegitimate as were many other persons whose parents had united in a permanent union without the benefit of clergy.³

We know few details of young Fremont's earlier life except that the family was always living from hand to mouth. In his younger school years, Fremont showed a remarkable inherent quality for study which promised a great future for him. Such was his desire for knowledge that, when only sixteen, he was able to enter Charleston College in the junior class.

². Ibid., p. 5.
³. Ibid., p. 8.
His work began around May 1, 1829, that marking the commencement of the college term.\textsuperscript{4}

Once in college, however, Fremont began to display the inconsistencies of character which were to plague him to the rest of his natural days. He fell in love and gradually neglected his studies until on February 5, 1831, within three months of his graduation he was dismissed for what the faculty journal called "habitual irregularity and incorrigible negligence." By special action of the college authorities, Fremont was given his B. A. degree in 1836.\textsuperscript{5}

In the presidential campaign of 1856, the amorous actions of Fremont's youth were to come back to him in another form, political propaganda. This is another story, however, and will be related at a future time.

Fremont spent the school year of 1832-1833 teaching school in Charleston. In May of 1833, Fremont, just twenty years of age, started on the first of his travels. He signed aboard the vessel "Natchez" on a cruise to South America. Fremont went in the capacity of teacher of mathematics. Since there was no naval

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 16.
academy in existence as of this time, such teachers were required.

Fremont had obtained his appointment through Joel Poinsett, the man remembered chiefly for two things: the naming of the poinsettia flower in his honor, and his diplomatic services, he being the first American diplomat to Mexico. We are told that Mr. Poinsett "disapproved of his entry into the navy, but was glad to help him seek a larger sphere than he could find in Charleston."6

Mr. Poinsett was the first of many influential persons who were to help Fremont in his career.

When the "Natchez", after a long cruise during which it touched a considerable number of South American ports, returned to the United States, Fremont went back to Charleston and here, fortunately, circumstances gave him a better opportunity ashore than any available at sea. But for a time, he was genuinely tempted to remain afloat. Congress had provided for several professorships of mathematics in the navy at $1,200 a year. Fremont passed an examination for and was offered a commission in the navy as professor of mathematics. But he declined this to serve as a surveyor.

6. Ibid., p. 22.
By accepting the surveyor position, Fremont came into contact with Captain W. S. Williams of the United States Topographical Corps. Williams led a survey of the projected Louisville, Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad route, Fremont being his assistant.

The fall of 1836 found him once more unemployed; and again an unexpected chance took him a step nearer to the exploration field.

This was in the form of a survey in which he again aided Captain Williams. This was a military survey of the Georgia land claims. Here, on a rawer frontier than he had previously had the chance of seeing, the potential "Pathfinder" commenced his career of exploring.7

In this survey Fremont reached the conclusion, afterward more strongly impressed upon him, that the Indians could be civilized. According to Fremont, the Indian's culture depended upon his physical and social surroundings, and that the Washington authorities were too changeable, lax, and politically minded to be trustworthy agents for their case.8

Finally the survey was finished and Fremont, now twenty-four years of age, returned to Charleston.

Knowing that Fremont had decided on exploring as a life career, Poinsett was influential in bringing him to Washington early in 1838 and starting the machinery in motion which was later to commission him as a second lieutenant in the Corps.

Fremont arrived in the Capital at the right moment for the War Department had determined upon a new western survey. This was to be in the form of an exploration of the wide plateau country between the upper Mississippi and upper Missouri rivers. The man chosen to conduct this was Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, a distinguished foreign scientist. Poinsett planned to include Fremont in the expedition. When Fremont heard of his assignment to the proposed expedition, he was supremely happy.9

From his association with Nicollet, Fremont profited immeasurably. Nicollet trained him in mapping, mathematics, surveying, botanical and geological observation, and topographical mapwork until he had thoroughly mastered the intricacies of each.

After receiving his assignment, Fremont went to St. Louis, making the trip by stage over the Alleghenies and steamboat down the Ohio and up the Mississippi.

The Nicollet expedition on this, their first trip to the north, traveled by steamboat up the Mississippi River to the mouth of the St. Peter's or Minnesota River, where the fabulous Henry Sibley commanded a whole province of the American Fur Company in which he was a partner.

From Sibley's location, the expedition set out to explore what is now western Minnesota. Homeward bound, Nicollet took time out to survey the Le Sueur, while Fremont was sent to examine the Mankato, a deep stream lined by high narrow banks or cliffs.

December, 1838, found the Nicollet party in St. Louis, preparing for the work of the next year, which was to carry them to the upper Missouri. Just after Christmas Fremont was sent on to Washington with official dispatches, letters to Nicollet's friends, and a verbal report for Poinsett. A few weeks later his chief followed him. Returning to Missouri in the spring, Nicollet and Fremont began to form the basis of a new expedition.

The little party left St. Louis on April 4, 1839, on the steamer "Antelope" of the American Fur Company. On the seventieth day of struggle against the muddy Missouri, they reached Ft. Pierre, 1271 miles
above St. Louis. This was near the center of present South Dakota, then surrounded on all sides by the wild country of Indian and buffalo.10

From Ft. Pierre, the expedition, now on foot and horseback, journeyed as far north as the present site of Devil's Lake, North Dakota. The expedition then turned eastward to what is now Minnesota and renewed friendships with old comrades of the previous summer.

Finally the expedition, still making observations, descended the Minnesota and Mississippi; and early in November Fremont, paddling down the latter stream with a detachment of the party, landed at Prairie du Chien.11

Soon Fremont and Nicollet were back in Washington. Here, Fremont enjoyed a certain reputation with the younger officers of the Corps, for hadn't he been on expeditions that covered two of America's great waterways, the Mississippi and the Missouri? Nicollet's health, always delicate at the best, required a complete rest. So he took Fremont to Baltimore for a pleasant vacation. Friends there, particularly the

10. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
11. Ibid., p. 44.
members of the Catholic hierarchy, gave them a cordial welcome, and they were deluged with invitations. Their quarters were at the Sulpician seminary, St. Mary's College, where comfortable rooms were always ready for Nicollet, and where the president, J. M. J. Chanche, made them at home.12

After their vacation, which included entrée among some of the nicest homes in Baltimore, Nicollet and Fremont started on the project of placing their findings into maps. In the company of F. R. Hassler, a scientist of Swiss birth, who was the head of the Coast Survey, work commenced on the map making. Though it was tedious at times, the work did progress.

In the city of Washington with its thirty thousand population, everyone of importance soon knew everybody else, and Fremont, introduced by the two eminent scientists, had entrée to the best homes. It is significant to notice the statement of a friendly biographer: "He saw or cared little for the purely political circles."13

Regardless of whether he did or did not care for political circles, Fremont, through Mr. Poinsett,

12. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
13. Ibid., p. 50.
the Secretary of War under President Van Buren, was next to meet the man who was perhaps to have the most important influence on his life, Thomas Hart Benton, senator from Missouri. Benton and Fremont found much in common; the former would tell the latter about his views of the opportunities that were to be opened up for the country if the area beyond the Missouri were to be explored.

Benton, in spite of his peculiarities, had to be considered. He was the floor leader of the Van Buren administration in the Senate, a venerable statesman of the old school who represented much of American opinion.

Fremont quickly recognized the prophetic vision of Benton, and was soon to find although the latter had never been far beyond the Mississippi, he was, by the aid of avid reading, able to hold his own with almost anyone when the subject of western travel arose.14

When Fremont became familiar with the Benton household, only three children, the two youngest daughters and the son Randolph, were at home. The other two daughters, Jessie and Sarah, were in a boarding school in Georgetown.

In meeting Jessie, Fremont was to make the acquaintance of the one person who in the grim days to

come was his bulwark against the cruel reverses that he was to encounter.

Jessie Hart Benton is one of the most fascinating women of American history. She was the favorite of the "Old Roman," having accompanied him as a small girl to many of his important speeches at various congressional places. A woman of sound character, possessed of a strong will, she was the moulding influence of Fremont's life.

The effect that Jessie had on Fremont at their first meeting was one that is rare for a man who was comparatively fresh from the raw frontier. Let Fremont express it in his own words:

I went with the eldest of the sisters to a school concert in Georgetown, where I saw her. She was then in the bloom of her girlish beauty, and perfect health effervesced in bright talk which the pleasure of seeing her sister drew out. Naturally I was attracted. She made the effect that a rose of rare color or beautiful picture would have done.15

For her part, Jessie responded as quickly to the dash and energy of the handsome Fremont.

Months were to pass before the intrepid Jessie, coming home for a vacation, was able to see her ardent admirer. When she did return, Fremont's visits to the

15. Fremont, op. cit., p. 66.
Benton home became more frequent than ever. The courtship progressed so rapidly that the parents finally stepped in. While they liked and admired Fremont, he was not financially successful, and promotion in the army at that time was exceedingly slow. By the winter of 1840-41, it was taken for granted that Fremont was not to see Jessie except on rare occasions.

Fremont's first responsibilities as a leader came directly as a result of his infatuation with Jessie. The Bentons got Poinsett to send Fremont off on an expedition to make a survey of the Des Moines River in the Iowa Territory, the idea being to separate the two young lovers. However, the young people were not left without hopes, for there had been an informal agreement between them and Jessie's parents that their engagement was to have a year's probation. At the end of that period they might, if their minds were unchanged, be married.

Fremont was expected to complete his task within six months. He left for St. Louis and there engaged a competent crew. Among this personnel of the new expedition were some members of the Nicollet expedition. Fremont's work on the Des Moines
was accomplished as quickly as impatience could desire. He established the course of the river upward from its mouth to the Raccoon Forks, about two hundred miles in all, taking his astronomical observations with great care. Fremont was for the first time to feel the responsibility of an individual command.  

After successfully completing the expedition, Fremont was back in Washington in the early autumn of 1841. After working the results of the survey into map form, Fremont resumed his romance with Jessie.

The young couple, taking matters into their own hands, disregarded parental admonishment and were married on October 19, 1841.  

The Bentons, showing all the stubborn characteristics of their clan, were highly indignant at the news of the runaway marriage. However, Jessie and Fremont were soon forgiven and were welcomed back into the family circle.

The marriage of Jessie Hart Benton to John Charles Fremont was the commencement of a compact that was to last for nearly two score years. They were to balance each other both in temperament and intellect. Their union was to be blessed with children and many

17. C. Goodwin, *John Charles Fremont*, p. 34.
happy moments for both of them.

So closes the first phase of Fremont's life. Now happily married, and deriving much from his relationship with Thomas Hart Benton, Fremont was to start the second part of his career, the conduction of expeditions on a large scale.

Shortly after Fremont's marriage, events began to shape for the commencement of his first large scale expedition. Officials at Washington had intended to send Nicollet on an exploring expedition west of the Missouri. The purpose of this was to open a route for emigration to Oregon through the mountains. Nicollet was to have Fremont as his main assistant.18

Fremont in his Memoirs tells us more explicitly of the nature of this proposed expedition. According to him it was:

To indicate and describe the line of travel, and the best positions for military forts; and to describe, and fix in position, the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains, at which this initial expedition was to terminate. In addition to this it had a political character. It was to have a bearing on the holding of our territory on the Pacific.19

The plans were not carried out as originally

18. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
scheduled. Nicollet, who had been in poor health, was not responding satisfactorily to rest and as the year 1841 wore on to its conclusion, it was generally conceded by the better informed that he would not head this expedition.

So it was no surprise to anyone, that on New Year's Day, 1842, Fremont was notified of his appointment as commander of the proposed expedition.

From January to May, 1842, Fremont was busily engaged in perfecting plans for his expedition. Finally, during the first part of May, he left the city of Washington for St. Louis. Upon arrival there, he spent several weeks selecting men for the expedition. It was at this time that Fremont met the fabulous Kit Carson, whom he was to find out lived up to the reputation that he enjoyed as one of America's greatest scouts, perhaps only rivaled in that capacity by Jim Bridger.

On the tenth of June, 1842, Fremont announced every preparation complete and gave the order to break camp.

This first expedition, led by Fremont and guided by the redoubtable Kit Carson, was absent from June 15, 1842, the date when they left the area of the
Kansas Ford, which was later to become known as Kansas City, Kansas, until October 1, when the men came back marching down along the banks of the Missouri.\textsuperscript{20}

The expedition proceeded up the Kansas to observe the general character of its valley, and then crossed to the Platte, which it followed to the foothills of the Rockies. On July 10, the expedition stopped at St. Vrain's Fort, a trading post about forty miles north of the present site of Denver. After a brief stop here, the party struggled up the Sweetwater Valley, and on August 8 reached the South Pass.\textsuperscript{21}

The party, now approximately 950 miles from the mouth of the Kansas, continued its march to the headwaters of the Green River, which flows into the Colorado. This reached, they set out to explore the Wind River Chain, a magnificent group of mountains.

After surveying the character of the surrounding countryside and making observations, the expedition, by easy stages, started back home. The expedition now on foot traversed the country eastward to the confluence of the Platte and Missouri Rivers. Going on to

\textsuperscript{20} Nevins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 105.
St. Louis, Fremont there sold his equipment. He proceeded by steamboat to Washington. He arrived in time to witness the birth of his first child, a daughter.

During the fall and winter of 1842-43, he and Jessie worked on a report which was to show the results of the recently concluded expedition. The resultant product was unique in that it contained a complete history of what the expedition had gone through. An interesting description of the Fremont Report is given us:

Three qualities in this and Fremont's later reports, taken in combination, give them distinction. The first is the fullness and precision of their information on every matter important to emigrants. They answered satisfactorily the essential question as to topography, terrain, water, soils, vegetation, wild life, temperature, and weather. The second is the skill with which, while doing this, they also responded to the curiosity of Americans upon more general sights and experiences in the West. All this informational breadth would have been far less effective but for the third quality of the reports, the warm subjective feeling which charged them. The first document was a young man's work, written in the first person, and filled with zest and enthusiasm, with Fremont's glowing love of novelty and adventure.22

Fremont's "Report" was first issued in the spring of 1843. It was undoubtedly one of the most widely read works of the day and among the most

22. Ibid., pp. 119-120.
popularly received government documents. Congress alone ordered twenty thousand copies and the report was reprinted by a dozen commercial publishers.23

This report was the turning point in Fremont's career. Up to this time, he had been known, figuratively speaking, to only his fellow associates and the inner circle that surrounded the Benton family. Now, Fremont, through the medium of the press, was to start the wheels of public opinion revolving toward himself, culminating thirteen years later in his nomination as a presidential candidate.

From now on, Fremont was to pay the price of being a celebrity. Before passing on, perhaps it would be fitting to say that Jessie Benton Fremont with her vivid pen was in a large manner responsible for the success of the report. Fremont had dictated the accounts of the expedition and Jessie wrote them with a style and flourish which was so typical of her.

Hardly had the first expedition been completed, when Fremont commenced agitating for a new assignment. His efforts coupled with Benton's resulted in a new expedition. The orders from the War Department through

Colonel Abert, Chief of the Topographical Engineers, instructed Fremont to carry his explorations westward into the Anglo-American territory of Oregon, or to be precise, "connect the reconnaissance of 1842 with the surveys of Commander Wilkes on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, so as to give a connected survey of the interior of our continent."24

Among the explorations conducted by Fremont, the second expedition was the most important for it extended over a larger area than the others. On this particular expedition, as far as equipment, guides and observations were concerned, everything was in his favor. Fremont was to enjoy the use of the finest scientific equipment available; also the employment of Kit Carson and Thomas Fitzpatrick veritably assured the success of the expedition.

The emigration across the plains had now grown to such proportions that it was starting to receive the attention of the entire country. The government in the West had its personal representative in the personage of Fremont who became a symbol of protection for the emigrants. Fremont was quick to respond to

this protective mantle that was hoisted upon his shoulders by reciprocating the feeling. 25

Of the principle expeditions that Fremont participated in, the second seems to be the one of major significance. The first expedition was of a rather insignificant value as compared to the rest. The third was to spend itself in California when Fremont became involved in military matters. The fourth was to terminate disasterously in the mountains of southern Colorado. The fifth followed a long period of easy living on the European continent. So it is with the second, or as the experts on American exploration say, "The Great Expedition," that we are to concern ourselves.

Before leaving St. Louis, Fremont added to his equipment a howitzer which was to be employed ostensibly against unfriendly Indians. However, news of this got back to Washington where Colonel Abert, Fremont's immediate supervisor, upon hearing of the acquisition of the gun, sent a letter to Fremont commanding him to return to Washington.

Now into the limelight comes the intrepid Jessie who was to commit the first of several "ethical errors"

which were to endear her to the average man. This occurred as follows. The command from Washington for Fremont to return was delivered to Jessie who, after reading its contents, did not send it to her husband, but instead sent him one of her own urging him on.26

Fremont, without hesitation, heeded his wife's admonition and proceeded on his way.

Fremont left his camp on May 29, 1842, and followed the Republican River valley westward. He split up his party on June 16, placing Fitzpatrick in charge of the main expedition with orders to proceed to St. Vrain's Fort. Fremont himself then took fifteen men and began a series of explorations which covered the country between the South Platte and the Arkansas rivers, from Fort Morgan to Pueblo.

Near Pueblo, Kit Carson again joined Fremont. The former was sent down the Arkansas to Bent's Fort with orders to procure additional mules and take them directly to St. Vrain's Fort.

After arriving at St. Vrain's Fort, Fremont had by this time completed a survey of some of the sources of the Kansas and South Platte rivers and the country

26. Ibid., p. 63.
around Colorado Springs. This was completed by July 23, 1843.27

After a brief reunion of forces, the party again separated, Fitzpatrick conducting the main force across the plains to the south of the Laramie River and along the emigrant trail to Fort Hall, while Fremont led an exploring expedition west and north over the mountains. His main purpose was to look for a pass. Fremont Pass, just north of Leadville, Colorado, probably was explored at this time. Continuing westward, Fremont traveled along the foot of the Medicine Bow Mountains until he reached the vicinity of Rawlins, Wyoming. From there he turned north into the valley of the Sweetwater River and came to the regular overland trail, and crossed the divide on August 13, through South Pass.28

Fremont reached the Bear River which was near the Wyoming-Idaho boundary. From here, he turned south along Bear River to visit Great Salt Lake. About twelve miles from the latter, Fremont's party saw the Great

27. Ibid., p. 64.
28. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
Salt Lake. At about this point, Fremont was joined again by Fitzpatrick who had supplies, and the little group merged with the main division at Fort Hall.

The party continued westward along the south bank of the Snake River. On September 27, Fremont again divided his party, leaving the twelve wagons in charge of Fitzpatrick, while he went on ahead with a lighter group.

By October 9, Fremont came to Fort Boise on the right bank of the Snake River. October 13 found him in the vicinity of the mouth of the Burnt River. He had crossed from the Great Basin to the Western Slope. Descending the basin of the "Grande Ronde," he left the emigrant trail in order to open a more convenient path over the Blue Mountains, and came to the Whitman settlements in the Walla Walla valley on October 24. By November 4, the expedition reached the Dalles. The main expedition did not go beyond this point. The leader, with a few followers, took a boat for Fort Vancouver to get supplies for the return trip, and was back with them by November 18.29

Now another object of his expedition had been

29. Ibid., p. 67.
completed; he had connected with the Wilkes expedition which had been along the Northwest Coast. Now, before starting home, Fremont had the satisfaction of knowing that he had accomplished something definite.

On the homeward journey, it was Fremont's purpose to explore the Klamath Lake country, to see the so-called St. Mary's Lake, and to find the reported Buenaventura River.30

On November 25, with all unnecessary equipment, mostly wheeled vehicles, discarded, the expedition started the long trek home.

By December 10, they had reached Klamath Marsh. Fremont's account of this section of the country is confusing:

He thought he was at Klamath Lake when he reached Klamath Marsh. He believed the Williamson River, which flows through it, was the Klamath River. He thought the Klamath River reached the Pacific north of the forty-second parallel, hence was within territory belonging to the United States, whereas it flows through territory which at that time belonged to Mexico, that is, through California. A little later he believed himself on the upper Sacramento, or Pitt River, when he really was in the country between Klamath Marsh and Summer Lake.31

30. Ibid., p. 67.
31. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
To state the case bluntly, Fremont was lost and did not know it. With a misconception of where he was and also where he was going, Fremont was fortunate to come out of the expedition as well as he did.

The expedition kept on in a southeastern direction, and by December 26, after some minor difficulties, it was now into the region known today as Nevada. They kept traveling south along the western edge of the desert with the Sierra Mountains on their right. By the middle of January, 1844, after encountering severe hardships, the expedition passed approximately twenty-five miles east of Reno, and came to the Carson City of today.32

Fremont kept looking for the much sought Buenaventura River, the St. Mary's River having never been properly located. The vacillating Fremont now changed his plans. He continued south looking for a pass across the Sierras into California rather than attempting the journey eastward. The determining factor in this change of plans was the condition of the expedition. The animals as a group were in a bad condition.33

32. Ibid., p. 72ff.
33. Ibid., p. 74.
The exact route taken by the expedition between January 20 and February 20 is not known, but the expedition did keep working into the Sierra range. Finally, on February 20, after some of the most trying conditions that an expedition has ever experienced, they were at the peak of the Sierras on the ridge of what is now known as Carson Pass.

On March 8, 1844, the entire party was united in camp at Fort Sutter, California, the expedition having been split up into various sections in order that some members might get through.34

By March 24, 1844, the expedition, completely rehabilitated physically and mentally, left the security of Sutter's Fort.

The expedition must have passed near the present sites of Stockton and Fresno. Continuing south by way of Bakersfield, it crossed the mountains, skirted the desert and turned east within a day's ride of Los Angeles.35

Fremont and his men continued eastward until they reached the Muddy River, a tributary of the Virgin,

34. Ibid., p. 81.
35. Ibid., p. 82.
probably in the vicinity of Moapa in the southeastern corner of Nevada. From here they went in a northeasterly direction until the southwestern corner of the present day state of Utah was reached.36

The rest of the expedition's journey eastward consisted of marching its way across present day Utah, the northwestern part of Colorado, and on up the valley of the North Platte. After some side diversion trips, Fremont was once more on the trail back home.

From the last part of July, 1844, to March 1, 1845, Fremont was engaged in the completion of the report on the second expedition. With Jessie's help, it was completed by March 1, 1845. The report was as well received as the first one, by both Congress and the general public.

Meanwhile preparations for a third expedition were being inaugurated. It was to cover that part of the Rocky Mountains in which the Arkansas, the Rio Grande, and the Colorado take their rise, and was intended to complete the examinations of the region around the Great Salt Lake. It was also to continue the examination of the Cascades and Sierra Nevadas

36. Ibid., pp. 87-88.
toward the southwest "so as to ascertain the lines of communication through these mountains to the ocean in that latitude. And in arranging this expedition, the eventualities of war were taken into consideration."37

Fremont crossed the plains as soon as possible early in the summer of 1845 to Bent's Fort. By August, the expedition was ready to leave. They went up the Arkansas to its source and finally arrived at the Great Salt Lake. By the end of October the expedition had entered Nevada. Here Fremont divided up the expedition, he himself taking one division across the mountains to Sutter's Fort, while another section agreed to meet him at a point in the upper San Joaquin Valley. After a misunderstanding occurred as to where the two sections should meet, Fremont returned to Sutter's Fort. While the members of his group were to wait for the others, Fremont went on to Monterey, arriving there in January 1846.38

The inner secrets of the Gillespie instructions to Fremont from Washington during the middle of the expedition; the orders to Larkin, the American consul,

which were denied as not existing; all of the facets of speculation which were derived from them; these are not for full discussion at this time. 39

Briefly, the following is the background of his activities in California after receiving Gillespie's instructions. He abruptly terminated his explorations in California, acting on the discretion which he believed had been given him. His reasons for doing so are highly interesting and of significant value. Fremont was to believe steadfastly that his action as head of an expedition was responsible for the American flag being raised at Monterey. Of course, this change from an "exploring" expedition to one of a punitive nature changed Fremont's status to a member of the American forces. For it is to be remembered that in October, 1846, he learned that he had been appointed a lieutenant-colonel in the army.

The ultimate result of Fremont's activities in California, outside of exploring, is that he got himself mixed up in military politics which almost engulfed him in their immensity.

It was inevitable that Fremont should place

39. Ibid., pp. 96-99.
himself under the command of the highest ranking officer in California during the period of American conquest, this being Commodore Stockton of the naval forces. This decision of Fremont's was to have its repercussions.

We do not need to ascertain whether or not Fremont was right in refusing to obey General Kearny's orders upon the latter's entry into California late in the winter of 1846, and thereby staying under the jurisdiction of the navy. Yet the resultants of these events need close scrutiny for the relationship that they bore on Fremont's later career.

As a result of his activities in California, Fremont was given a court-martial trial, which was conducted upon his return to Washington. This trial lasted from early November of 1847 to the last part of February, 1848. The trial itself was interesting because of the large amounts of rhetoric used up by both sides. The charge of mutiny was substantiated by a jury consisting of Fremont's fellow officers along with other charges of disobedience and conduct prejudicing good order. However, President Polk, in a mellow mood considering how Fremont had contributed to his expansionist plans, disallowed the charge of mutiny. However, the other
two charges were confirmed by Polk also.40

The publicity coming to Fremont from the American press of the day was mostly of a sympathetic nature, but the super-sensitive Fremonts, smarting under a decision that was not fair to them because it did not completely vindicate their cause, left for California.

This trip to California was to bring wealth and fame for the Fremonts, however, not without its sister miseries, ill-feeling and ultimate poverty.

By April of 1849, Fremont was in California. His resulting good fortunes in the Mariposa gold fields made him a millionaire. This coupled with his fame as the "Pathfinder" was to bring the name of Fremont forward as a political candidate for the office of senator from California. He was known to be a Democrat, and to belong nationally to the free-soil wing of that party. Having been subjected to the Benton clan's views on the opposition of slavery extension into the territories, Fremont, it was assumed, likewise held this view.

From the commencement of talk for the admission

40. Ibid., p. 148.
of California into the Union, Fremont had his name before the public. California was at this time in the throes of a protracted struggle between two groups of people over the slavery issue.

Fremont's platform, so to speak, was that he believed in a central, national railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific. Also in it, Fremont defended his financial dealing during his governorship in 1847. Finally, he expostulated on his purchase of the Mariposa tract. 41

The statements of Fremont given above were issued in December of 1849. Later in the same month, as a result of a compromise between the anti-slavery and pro-slavery factions, the legislature elected William Gwin, a slavery leader, and Fremont as senators from California. The Federal Constitution does not permit the expiration of the terms of two senators at the same time. As a result of a drawing, Fremont drew the short term and was senator little more than a year.

On September 9, 1850, California was admitted to the Union, and Fremont took his seat in the Senate. Half sick most of the time, he found it hard to work in

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41. J. Bigelow, Memoir of the Life and Public Services of John Charles Fremont, pp. 388-397.
Congress. He was able to put in only about twenty working days. Fremont's senatorial activities consisted mostly of introducing bills for the erection of state institutions. However, he did vote for the suppression of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and against a measure which provided a heavy prison sentence for any one who should be guilty of encouraging a slave to run away.42

Fremont's term in the Senate expired and he was not able to secure re-election because of his known views on slavery, California now being firmly in the grip of pro-slavery men.

The years between 1850 and 1854, as far as Fremont was concerned, were tied up with his work on the Mariposa tract, an expedition for the purpose of locating a suitable route for a proposed trans-continental railroad, and a trip to Europe in order to secure financial backing for the development of the Mariposa claims.

The resulting publicity from these activities, especially that connected with the expedition, were to keep the name of Fremont constantly before the public eye.

Chapter II

THE ELECTION OF 1856;
BACKGROUND AND RESULTS

The history of the Republican party has in its background some of the most interesting features of any movement that has swept across the American political horizon.

The Republican party of 1856 is in its history tied up with the old Whig party. With the re-election of Jackson in 1832, the opponents of his party, led by such men as Clay and John Q. Adams, united to form the "Whig" party. In the election of 1832 proper, they had been called "National Republicans"; now, with the addition of various elements, they assumed the title of "Whigs."

The Whig party had many diverse elements within its ranks. Chief among these were the planters of the South who resented the government's vigorous check of their nullification efforts in South Carolina, and the monied classes in the East who resented Jackson's anti-bank program.

The Whigs supported the Compromise of 1850
because of the fear of alienating both its northern and southern wings by refusing to do so. What ruined the Whig party as such was the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, and eventually led to the struggle between the free-soilers and slaveholders for the possession of Kansas. President Pierce, though losing the support of a sizeable amount of Democratic representatives from the North, carried the Kansas-Nebraska Bill through Congress with the help of Southern Whigs.43

The key point in a Northern Whig's argument could probably be phrased as follows. "Why should we support a party by whose actions, purported in violation of the Missouri Compromise, now set free labor against slave labor, that is, functioning against each other." "We cannot compete with slave labor in the territories."

The repudiation of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill by the small farmers of the Northern Whig faction was the deciding factor in the formation of the Republican party. The new party had some interesting diverse elements within itself. Primarily speaking, the party was dedicated to agrarian interests with some interesting

43. E. McChesney Sait, American Parties and Elections, p. 253f.
variations. Most of the small farmers north of the Mason-Dixon line, including a majority of the Democratic agrarian interests, joined the new Republican party. The second element to come into the Republican fold was the monied or propertied Northern Whigs who were able to get their aims written into the party plank. The third element was the Free-Soilers who sponsored the doctrines of free homesteads and resistance to the spread of slavery. The fourth and last element was that of abolitionism, which by its zealous nature was in the '60s almost to cost the Republicans their newly won laurels. Such was the composition of the Republican party.44

During the time that Congress was in the process of talking over the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the people of a little town in Wisconsin named Ripon met and suggested the formation of a new party. Just after the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the people of Jackson, Michigan, asked all persons who disliked slavery to gather there early in July. The immediate result of this later meeting was the practical formation of the Republican party.

44. Ibid., p. 255.
The two principal stipulations for membership in the new party were that the prospective enrollee favor repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

The Jackson assembly mentioned above recommended that a general convention be called to carry out its program. During the middle of July, 1854, Republican conventions were held in Ohio, Vermont, Indiana and Wisconsin.

During June of 1855, the "Republican Association of Washington, D. C." was founded. This organization with its rather imposing title had a very important function. It was to organize the sentiment in the Republican clubs which had been created on a national basis. In January of 1856 the "Republican Association of Washington" sent out a circular asking for the creation of clubs throughout the Union. Also, in January of 1856, the Washington Association sent out a call for a general convention to be held in Pittsburgh on February 22, 1856. The convention was held on that date, the most important item for consideration being that it provided for the creation of a general committee to be composed of one member from each state. This resultant was to be called the National Republican Committee.
Immediately after its inception, the National Committee called for a National Convention to meet at Philadelphia on June 17. Participation in the selection of delegates was perhaps the most important statement issued by the National Committee. That is, no one was to be kept from the National Convention because of his former party allegiance. Thus the Republican party appealed to the disgruntled elements within the country.\textsuperscript{45}

The first intimation that Fremont was to be nominated for the Presidency came from leaders of the Democratic party. This, because of its startling nature, demands explanation. Why should the man who was to be a presidential candidate on one ticket as a Republican nominee be approached by another party as to being their candidate also?

Probably in the late summer and early fall of 1855, Fremont was approached by elements of the Democratic party. This was in the form of contacts while he was still in Washington with Edward Carrington, a nephew of John B. Floyd and a relative of the Benton's, and through him, ultimately being drawn into discussions

\textsuperscript{45} Goodwin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 194f.
with southern leaders.46

At a conference lasting several days which was held at the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York, Fremont was offered support by southern agents if he would endorse the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Law. Fremont refused to agree with these proposed conditions and as a result the conference came to an end.47

The pressing question at hand would be why Fremont was selected by the Republicans out of a large group of potential candidates.

Many eastern Republicans would have preferred men like Seward, Chase, or some other leader who had waged campaigns against slavery. However, these men mentioned above had taken too radical a stand upon the slavery issue. McLean of Ohio had many supporters in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Illinois, but his advanced age was against him. So it was to a name that was "fresh," so to speak, in the political world that the Republicans turned. The Republicans' chief reasons for selecting Fremont were that he had no embarrassing record on slavery, and he enjoyed a popularity with the


people which a new party could capitalize on.

During the winter of 1855–56, the "boom" for Fremont progressed rapidly. Around Christmas, his boom opened with a simultaneous rush in Washington, New York, and Boston. One of Fremont's most influential advisers was Banks of Massachusetts who toiled for him effectively in the three cities mentioned above. Banks stated the crux of the Republican problem: they could not make the free soil cause function until they had a man as well as a platform, and Fremont was ideal; the others had been too active partisans to run well.48

Another important cog in the Republican machine was John Bigelow of the New York Evening Post. His "conversion" to the Fremont cause is worth quoting. Fremont himself had been staying at the Metropolital Hotel. Mr. Bigelow is quoted as follows:

We called there about ten o'clock the following morning. Fremont was not yet up. He did not, however, keep us waiting long. He impressed me more favorably than I had expected. His manner was refined and dignified. Our conversation had no special political significance, though it was so directed that he could not fail to infer that our visit was something more than a formal call. Not long after this interview, I invited a few prominent gentlemen of both parties but with Free Soil proclivities, to my house to consider the feasibility of making Fremont our candidate for

48. Ibid., p. 426.
the Presidency, and especially to meet the venerable Frank B. Blair, of Washington, who chanced to be in town at the time, the guest of General Dix, I believe. I remember but three of the others who were present. They were Samuel J. Tilden, Edwin P. Morgan, afterwards Governor and United States Senator, and Edward Miller. All of the party but Mr. Tilden favored Fremont. Mr. Tilden was under the impression that he could be more useful inside than outside of the Democratic party, and I think instinctively hesitated to commit himself in such an important matter to a man he had never seen, and whose qualifications for such an important position as the chief magistrate of this country had never been demonstrated.49

The above mentioned conference was in January of 1856. In December of the preceding year, at a conference at Blair's famous Silver Springs estate, Blair himself seriously considered Fremont as a likely candidate.50

One great threat still menaced the ambitions of Fremont and this was the anti-slavery Know-Nothings who had seceded from the pro-slavery element in February, 1856. The seriousness of this situation, as far as Fremont was concerned, is as follows. If the anti-slavery Know-Nothings nominated McLean or Stockton, and the Republicans ratified the nomination, all would


be lost. If the Know-Nothings nominated McLean and the Republicans Fremont, two anti-slavery tickets would divide the vote and make victory impossible. But if the Know-Nothings nominated Fremont on June 12, this action could possibly place Fremont in a bad light with the foreign-born voters and hurt his chances later on.

Fremont prepared a letter to be released if the Know-Nothings should nominate him. In it, he spoke out against racial or national prejudices.

Fremont did not release the letter because of the following events. The major Republican politicians descended upon the Native American Convention in Philadelphia. A clever plan was sponsored by Isaac Sherman; it was to call for the nomination of Banks for President and some good Whig for Vice-President; and as soon as the Republican Convention nominated Fremont, Banks was to resign in his favor.

Between the 12th and 16th of June, the plan was carried out. The Know-Nothings nominated Banks and William F. Johnston of North Carolina. On the 17th, the Republican Convention opened and two days later it nominated Fremont and Dayton of New Jersey. The Republican managers took some of the "lingering" or hesitant Native Americans to Fremont's New York home
and there the "Pathfinder" convinced them of his position by agreeing to points of principle. A compromise on the vice-presidency saw Dayton being nominated.

Politically speaking, Fremont would have been ruined before the campaign started if his anti-Native American letter had fallen into their hands.

The leading features in the platform of 1856 for the Republicans were:

First. The maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Federal Constitution as essential to the preservation of our republican institutions.


Third. The preservation of the rights of the states.

Fourth. The preservation of the Union of the States.

Fifth. Denial of the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, of any individual or association of individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any Territory of the United States. Hence, opposition of the extension of slavery into free territory.

Sixth. The right and duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism—polygamy and slavery.

Seventh. Arraignment of the Pierce administration, the President, his advisers, agents, supporters, apologists, and accessories, for their high crime in Kansas against the Constitution, the Union and humanity, and a fixed purpose to bring the actual perpetrators of those atrocious outrages and their accomplices to a sure and condign punishment hereafter.

Eighth. Demand for the immediate admission of Kansas as a State in the Union with her present free constitution.

Ninth. Immediate and efficient aid in the construction of a railroad to the Pacific Ocean.

Tenth. Appropriation by Congress for the improvement of rivers and harbors of a national character,
required for the accommodation and security of our existing commerce.
Eleventh. Restoring the action of the Federal Government to the principles of Washington and Jefferson. 51

So it was with this platform that the fledgling Republican party started the campaign of 1856.

The political picture was extremely complicated in 1856. In the eastern states there were four parties, the Whigs, the Know-Nothings, and the Republicans. The Democrats and Whigs were more or less ready to combine in order to withstand their worst enemy, the Republicans. The days of the Know-Nothing, or American party, were just about at an end and large sections of their members were going over to the Republican banner. In the West, except in Ohio, where the Whigs still held out, the parties were the Democrats and Republicans. 52

Large numbers of the anti-slavery Know-Nothings did not join the Republicans because of differences over immigration and religion. Also, coalition tickets were unpopular among many voters; thus many Whigs joined the Democrats to insure the election of Buchanan.

To check this tendency, and to give Whig votes


for the Fillmore cause, a national Whig convention was held in Baltimore on September 17. It ratified the Know-Nothing ticket with Fillmore and Donelson at its head. The platform kept to the Whig principle of avoiding geographical characteristics. Now the Republicans wanted Fillmore to poll enough votes in the South to throw the Democratic machine off balance so that Fremont could win.53

The Democrats had held their convention on June 2, 1856. The pre-convention speculations of the Democrats are most interesting. A great many of their ranks had not deserted the party because of the demands of the slave powers. With his policy, Pierce was in high favor with the delegates from the South. The northern wing, more moderate in its demands, preferred Buchanan while Douglas had his backers. After political maneuverings by all elements concerned, Buchanan was nominated. The platform is significant, if only for the stand taken on slavery. The Democratic platform stated that the party would adhere to the Compromise of 1850 and would not tolerate any agitation of

the slavery question.54

It may be discerned readily that the slavery issue was to be a striking feature of the forthcoming campaign. In Fremont's acceptance speech, there was evidence of skillful and adroit maneuvering on the slavery question.

What should be done for "bleeding Kansas" was soon to become the chief issue in the presidential election of 1856. The Republicans could not hope to find support in the South. It could only hope for division within the Democratic party. They did not have to look far for dissatisfied members of the Democratic party. These were the people who were disgusted with their party's action in the governing of Kansas.55

Now for the actual conduct of the campaign.

First, let us see how Fremont fared with the press.

Naturally, the Republican press was the first to "beat the drums" for Fremont. Horace Greeley in the New York Tribune wrote:

> Having exhibited a singular force of character and a distinguished ability in every undertaking to which he applied himself, he had now been called to


the difficult but glorious enterprise of rescuing the government and the Union from the hands of a body of unprincipled politicians. 56

William Cullen Bryant asked the secret of his popularity:

The times require in the chief magistrates of the nation an unshaken courage, perfect steadiness of purpose, and a ready command of resources. The times require a man who has something heroic in his character. 57

Henry Raymond in the New York Times wrote in similar vein about the attributes of Fremont. Newspapers outside of the metropolitan area of New York City were also praising Fremont. The Philadelphia North American, edited by Morton McMichael, took the Republican side; so did the Chicago Tribune. The German press did valiant service for Fremont's cause.

All of the larger newspapers which were Republican made a special campaign price to summer subscribers. Leading poets of the day contributed to the Republican press.

As the campaign progressed, the Republican press waxed vehemently for Fremont. Bryant in the New York Evening Post stated a good analogy between the election of 1848 and the one in progress, showing how

56. Quoted in A. Nevins, Fremont-Pathmarker of the West, p. 435.

57. Ibid.
the Free-Soil party had grown into the Republican party. The Democratic press gave Fremont a reception to the political arena that possibly has never been matched. The nomination of Fremont was hardly announced before charges of incompetency were leveled at him. The Democrats attempted to prove that he was a Catholic, hoping to deflect the Know-Nothing vote from the Republicans. Partisan papers kept the religious issue before the people until the day of the election. This undoubtedly hurt Fremont's election hopes.

Democratic editors were quick to expand on rumors coming out of the West about Fremont's handling of the Indian beef contracts. Incidentally, Fremont lost the California vote because of lack of newspaper support.

The Democratic press even brought up the romances of Fremont's earlier years with their vicious political implications, and we read:

He became acquainted with a very pretty girl, in moderate circumstances, and, as she lived in the front of the house I occupied, I had every opportunity of seeing the love exhibited by the couple on very many occasions. He was engaged to her, and deserted her without a cause, and the family were very much distressed about the matter. I have witnessed the intimacy myself, and the facts are notorious in our town at this time.58

58. Charleston Courier, October 27, 1856, quoted in A. Nevins, Fremont-Pathmarker of the West, pp. 24-25.
The editor of the Greenville Patriot and Mountaineer made a statement in 1856 that Fremont "became engaged to a young lady here, and we understand that the time was appointed for their wedding, and he proved false to his plighted faith."

The Democratic press, though effectively diminishing Fremont's chances by the tactics mentioned above, practically extinguished them through its use of a very potent threat. This was in the form of a theme which went something like this: "If Fremont, who is a man representing sectional interests, is elected, the Union will be disrupted." With this type of appeal, plus always keeping before both northern and southern voter the threat of what would happen to the South's "peculiar" institutions if an avowed anti-slavery man were elected, was it not apparent that the Democratic party had sufficient hopes for winning the election of 1856?

Try as they might, the Fremont press could not scoff away the seeds of disunion that had been disseminated by the Democratic press. Convinced that the South was in earnest, many northerners voted either for Fillmore or Buchanan to avoid this contingency.

Throughout the North, the Republican campaign
of 1856 was to spur the people into frenzies which had not been equaled since the "log cabin" campaign of 1840. Tremendous rallies, torch light processions, marching bands, all of these methods were utilized by the Republicans. The statistics for these demonstrations are unusually high, but after all, wasn't this an unusual election? The Republicans, taking advantage of an alleged statement of Buchanan's pertaining to labor, cleverly used it as a procession theme. 59

Fremont "Clubs" came into operation almost as soon as his nomination was announced. The Republicans effectively utilized the organizations perfected by the Emigrant Aid Societies and other agencies for the relief of Kansas. About half of the townships in the North were organized into Fremont Clubs. The greater part of the South balanced this by not recognizing the Fremont ticket.

Republican "stump" speakers were especially prominent, with the Illinois delegation including Abraham Lincoln and Lyman Trumbull doing yeoman work. Speakers were kept busy up until the last minutes of the campaign.

We have some interesting comments by some of the leading men of the day as to Fremont's chances of being

elected; a few bear mentioning.

Thomas Hart Benton went out on speaking trips against Fremont, believing that if he were elected the Union would be destroyed.60

Orville Hickman Browning, a lawyer from Illinois, who later was to be an adviser to Presidents Lincoln and Johnson, upon hearing of the nomination of Fremont at Philadelphia, would have preferred McLean. However, this did not keep Browning from giving support to Fremont.61

The effervescent Theodore Parker was for Fremont, believing that if he were not elected a fight would ensue between the anti- and pro-slavery men.62

An interesting observation of a Southern Unionist is particularly noteworthy at this time; in it one sees a viewpoint expressed by an individual within the arena of Democratic politics:

It may be taken for granted that the South would not stand emancipation nor anything like it; but I have no idea that Fremont's election would of itself effect any rising of the masses against


the Government. A great deal would depend on the address and ability that he might evince in the Presidential chair. If he should, like Pierce, re-echo the cry of his party, and send out manifestoes in the tone of the North, as Pierce has done in that of the South, no one could answer for the consequences. But as I have a high opinion of Mr. Fremont's ability, I do not feel my sense of security in the Union at all diminished by the prospect of his election. Nor did I entertain any other sentiments when that even seemed more probable than it does at present.63

Thurlow Weed, who was grudgingly conceded, even by his worst enemies, to be one of the most acute political observers of the day, had his opinion of Fremont and the Republican party's chances. It has been said that the failure of Weed to nominate Seward in the campaign of 1856 resulted in a blow to his political vanity. One of his most competent biographers tells us:

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Had Mr. Weed consented to the plan, Mr. Seward would have been nominated. It was with difficulty that he prevailed upon his friends to bide their time until the next national canvass. He reasoned that the Know-Nothings, were Mr. Seward nominated, would ensure the election of Mr. Buchanan. Even as against any other Republican, Mr. Buchanan was almost sure to be elected, and, if elected, Mr. Weed thought, absolutely certain to make so many mistakes that nothing could prevent Republican ascendancy in 1860. It was only four years to wait, and under the circumstances nothing was to be gained by

precipitancy. 64

In this particular campaign, the problem of finances was of tremendous importance. Generally speaking, it was a case of promises and no fulfilling of commitments. The two most glaring examples of this happened in New York and Pennsylvania. In one of Greeley's letters written to James S. Pike, he says:

We Fremonters of this town [New York] have not one dollar where the Fillmoreans and Buchananians have ten each, and we have Pennsylvania and New York both on our shoulders. Each state is utterly miserable, so far as money is concerned; we must supply them with documents, canvass them with our best speakers, and pay for their rooms to speak in and our bills to invite them. 65

At the start of the campaign, the Republicans recognized the extreme necessity of pouring money into Pennsylvania. Two things hurt their chances in the state. One was weak party organization, the other as mentioned above, lack of money. On the other hand, the Democratic machine was constantly striving for money within the state.

The Republicans in Pennsylvania could only, in the face of keen financial competition by their rivals,

64. T. W. Barnes, Memoir of Thurlow Weed, Vol. II, p. 245.

resort to an extensive speaking organization in the state. The slow-minded Pennsylvanian Dutch, however, seemed to prefer "Old Buck" and peace to Fremont and what his opposition called . . . . "revolution."

Fremont always believed that if Simon Cameron had been chosen for vice-president instead of Dayton, and if the Republicans had developed an organization comparable to that of the Democratic machine in Pennsylvania, the Republicans might have won the election. Perhaps the most interesting comment on this speculation of Fremont's is answered by one of his biographers:

This is doubtful, for even had Fremont won the state election, Buchanan's chances for carrying Pennsylvania in November would have remained good; the Whig supporters of Fillmore, who in Philadelphia outnumbered the Republicans three to one, would have voted almost en masse against Fremont. But it is interesting to note that Cameron believed that if he and Thurlow Weed had been able to organize the state fully in July, victory would have been certain.66

The role enjoyed by Fremont during the actual course of the campaign is worth glancing at. His conduct during it was exemplary of how a good candidate must behave—in anything but a political campaign.

66. Nevins, Fremont—Pathmarker of the West, p. 455.
With the single exception of his acceptance speech, there were no major utterances on his part during this campaign. Perhaps it was a streak of timidity that dominated Fremont and kept him out of the public eye. More likely it was part of a planned campaign within a campaign so to speak.

The brains behind the Republican party evidently were trying to blend Fremont's political naiveness with the glamour of his name. After all, Fremont had very little previous experience in politics. Probably, to the politicians there was only one practicable solution, to keep Fremont before the public eye by having him give the usual perfunctory speeches and then to "retire" him to the sidelines. In a word, the Republicans hoped, by capitalizing on Fremont's name and by seeking diversion within the opposition's ranks, to win the presidential canvass. This particular Republican strategy was working well until the Democrats, with their threats of disunion if Fremont were elected, turned the tide.

Frankly, the presidential election of 1856 was not to be won by a festive spirit and with a moral crusade against slavery. Buchanan was welcomed by a large

67. Ibid., p. 438.
portion of the North as a safe man. His unqualified acceptance of the Cincinnati platform convinced the southern leaders of his stability. In the line of veteran campaigners, the Democrats utilized very effectively the talents of John Van Buren, Benton, Douglas, and others. It has been said that, by "pussy-footing" on the slavery issue, large numbers of the Van Buren Democrats remained true to the party.68

Although the campaign was conducted with a political vigor that was amazing up until the last moments before the actual casting of the ballots, the outcome of the election was determined on October 14, this being the day for vote casting in Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, the issue was in doubt for two days; the Democrats finally won the state by a majority of less than 3,000 votes. On the same day, Indiana went Democratic and Ohio voted Republican. After losing such a vital state as Pennsylvania, the Republicans were depressed.69

The above mentioned results confirmed the predictions of the Springfield Republican. This newspaper

69. Ibid., pp. 375-376.
pointed out that the slave states would cast 120 electoral votes and the free states 176. It would require 149 to elect a president. The doubtful states, with the number of electoral votes cast by each, were Pennsylvania, 27; Indiana, 13; New Jersey, 7; California, 4. Fremont, it was asserted, would carry New York (35), Ohio (23), Illinois (11), Michigan (6), Iowa (4), Maine (8), New Hampshire (5), Vermont (5), Massachusetts (13), Rhode Island (4), Connecticut (6), and Wisconsin (5).

With the exception of Illinois, all of these states given to Fremont as early as the week of October 18 gave their electoral vote as predicted. Also, the states listed as doubtful by the Republicans went to Buchanan. The final count of the electoral votes saw Buchanan with 174 and Fremont with 114. Not to be forgotten was Fillmore with 8 votes.

A breakdown of the popular vote is as follows:

Buchanan . . . . . . . 1,838,169
Fremont . . . . . . . 1,341,264
Fillmore . . . . . . . 874,534

Such were the results of the presidential election of 1856.70

70. Goodwin, op. cit., p. 211.
A broad view, taking into consideration the above statistics, shows the "key" to the election. The Republicans lost the election because of the Whig votes cast for Buchanan and Fillmore. Fillmore alone received the support of almost 900,000 Whigs and Native Americans, a third of them in the North. The significance of the Fillmore votes is that they were cast against a sectional party, the Republicans, to avert the possibility of a civil war.

As after every presidential campaign, there were speculations upon the value of Fremont as a candidate. Horace Greeley, writing in a book published eight years later, gives an interesting analysis of the votes cast for Fremont:

The vote polled for Fremont and Dayton in 1856 considerably exceeded the solid strength, at the time, of the Republican party. It was swelled in part by the personal popularity of Col. Fremont, whose previous career of adventure and of daring—his explorations, discoveries, privations, and perils—appealed, in view of his comparative youth for a Presidential candidate, with resistless fascination, to the noble young men of our country; while his silence and patience throughout the canvass, under a perfect tempest of preposterous, yet annoying calumnies, had contributed to widen the circle of his admirers and friends.71

With the latter part of the aforementioned

quotation, the present writer is forced to disagree. That is, the "silence and patience" part was responsible in some degree for Fremont's defeat. Many presidential candidates have endured the same calumnies and private hardships that Fremont was called upon to withstand and came out none the worse for the experience.

John Bigelow, who, it is remembered, wrote a biography of Fremont during the campaign, gives perhaps the most illuminating opinion of Fremont that is to be found anywhere in a later book. Written over half a century later, shed of the artificialities that surround a campaign, and mellowed by time, it deserves our close attention:

I am persuaded now, as I was then, that it was impossible to have selected another equally available candidate for our purpose. I became as fully convinced before the Colonel died—that, much as the country was to be congratulated for his nomination, it was to be congratulated upon his defeat. He was in no sense a statesman. He owed his success as he had at this election—and it was very flattering—largely to his wife, a remarkably capable and accomplished woman, to her father, through whose influence with the Democratic position of the coalition he was naturally expected to profit, and to his utterly neuter gender in politics. He rendered his country as a candidate all the service he was capable of rendering it, by incarnating in that character the principles of the Free Soil party, and thus combining in the free states the forces upon which the perpetuity of our Union was to be dependent, and the doctrine of popular sovereignty vindicated as it had never been before. He lived long enough, however, to satisfy everyone
that he might have proved a disastrous failure as a President. A wedge may be useful in splitting a log, but useless in converting either of its parts into a chest of drawers.  

Allan Nevins, in a surprising "confession" considering the fact that Fremont is his hero, admits to practically the same estimation in the above quotation.

Fremont's poise after the election was practically of the same composure as during the campaign. As it will be remembered, the super-critical Gideon Welles, writing later, did Fremont justice as to his poise during those trying times.

In summing up Fremont and his effect upon the election of 1856, the question arising would seem to be: What had the Republicans accomplished by using Fremont as their candidate?

The Republican party by its good showing had practically "buried" the dying Whig party. The election had politically scolded such New England Whigs as Choate and Caleb; also it had properly chastized


such northern Democrats as Lewis Cass, Franklin Pierce and others. From a sectional viewpoint, the Republicans had succeeded in establishing themselves as a major party.

The prospects of the Republican party after the national defeat of 1856 were alternately discouraging and hopeful. The discouraging aspect was that the party was not growing fast enough. The hopeful aspect was that the party had acquired leading statesmen of the North who at first had held themselves aloof from the party, but now, after seeing the new movement struggle through its birth throes were no longer reticent to join.75

Just where did Fremont stand in regard to the Republican party? Well, in spite of the fact that he was perhaps the only candidate for his party who could have polled over a million votes, he was still politically "dead." Even the most partisan Fremont advocate would have to admit that he did not have either the gifts or training that a politician needs in order to be successful. So now, the most important phase of Fremont's political life had come to an end. True,

he was to figure prominently in at least one more campaign, but never on the same scale of proportions.
Chapter III

THE YEARS BETWEEN 1856 AND 1860; FREMONT'S PART IN THE CAMPAIGN OF 1860

The years between 1856 and 1860 were ones of alternating happiness and misery. Almost immediately after the election, Jessie took the children to Europe while Fremont went back to California and his Mariposa claim.

Thomas Hart Benton was slowly dying of cancer although he kept this concealed for the most part from his family. However, Jessie was called home from Europe to his bedside. Benton died early in April, 1858. His loss to the family was serious, both personally and financially. Fremont was to lose the guiding hand of a faithful friend, the election of 1856 notwithstanding.

By the spring of 1859, it began to appear that Fremont was going to make some money out of the Mariposa claim. But if the gold mines were not causing the Fremonts worry, their own personal indifference to money was. Life to the Fremonts, even in good times, was annoying because of their poor management.
Leaving Fremont for the moment with his Mariposa woes, let us look at the political situation as the election year of 1860 neared.

Seward, for the time being, was the leader of the Republican party, though still independent in his voting.76

Everything, however, was not serene in Seward's political life. For some time there had been a growing fear of Seward's radicalism with a consequent decline in the stock of the New York leader. Old line Whigs in the central part of that state had never been reconciled to Seward's strength. In Illinois, his position was shaky because of his declarations of policy regarding "labor" and slave or "capital" states.

In Illinois, however, though the chances of Fremont's winning were slim, the German voters' preference for him always made his potential chances a nightmare for other political aspirants. As results have proven, the moderate Lincoln appealed to all.77

A not unfriendly biographer of Fremont's tells


us of his position in the election of 1860. The quo-
tation bears close watching.

For the Republican nomination in 1860, Fremont was, of course, not seriously considered. An unsuccessful candidate for the Presidency is almost never named again; and Fremont had done nothing to improve his political standing, while other aspirants had come steadily forward. When Gideon Welles made inquiries of friends as to the complete dropping of Fremont, he heard various gossipy explanations which—recorded in the Welles papers—are of no value save as they indicate that John Bigelow had become extremely dubious of Fremont's stability, while the Blair family had grown actively critical. Old Francis P. Blair spoke of the explorer with positive dislike. The ground had been laid for the subsequent breach between the two men. Yet some talk of Fremont persisted till the very eve of the convention. The explorer thought it worth while to authorize a California friend to withdraw his name if presented, saying he would not stand against any man acceptable on general grounds, and as zealous as himself for building a Pacific railroad from the Middle West. Edward Bates of Missouri helped spread the news of this position among delegates to the convention. 78

Another author tells us tersely of the position of Fremont and other past presidents and presidential aspirants:

No former President or presidential candidate had any prominence in the campaign, neither Van Buren, Tyler, Fillmore, Scott, nor Pierce. Fremont was entirely out of the public mind. 79

78. A. Nevins, Fremont—Pathmarker of the West, pp. 470-471.

In the actual balloting in the Republican convention of 1860, Fremont, in the standard book on conventions, is not even registered as receiving a vote.80

In a summation of Fremont's effect upon the campaign of 1860, one is tempted to say that he was "conspicuous by his absence." Seriously though, Fremont, with his vacillating tendencies, was not the man to cope with the trying times which were sure to await the winner of this election of 1860.

It would seem that the word "moderate" is perhaps the key to the presidential campaign of 1860. Fremont, who had been a moderate in 1856, was, by 1860, no longer regarded as being in that category. Why was this so? Well, his actions in the campaign of 1856, considering the time and the issues which were at stake, had stamped him as a moderate. However, the political situation of 1860, as far as the Republicans were concerned, called for a man who could conciliate all of the varied interests within the party itself. Lincoln, by his harmonious attempts within the Republican party, was the moderate of 1860. Briefly, Fremont represented a party which, in spite of its radical tendencies, was

moderate in 1856. Lincoln in 1860, however, appealed to the elements of the party as a moderate; in four years the connotation of the word "moderate" had changed.

So it is with no more than speculative attempts on our part as to the role that Fremont enjoyed in the campaign of 1860 that we progress to the third and last campaign which the "Pathfinder" was to be connected with—the election of 1864.
Chapter IV

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864 AND
FREMONT'S PART IN IT

Still having money troubles with the "eternal" Mariposa grants, Fremont went to Europe. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he was in Paris to dispose of a part of his Mariposa estate; soon he was engaged in activities which would purportedly aid the Union cause. These activities were in the form of purchasing arms in England. On June 27, 1861, Fremont was back in the United States.

After a consultation with President Lincoln, Fremont was appointed commander of the newly created Western Department with headquarters at St. Louis.81

Powerful political support for Fremont had secured this command which he was to assume. Horace Greeley, Gustave Koerner, leader of the anti-slavery German population of the Mississippi Valley, and Senator Trumbull of Illinois emphasized the popular approval

81. C. Goodwin, John Charles Fremont, p. 214f.
that would greet Fremont's appearance in the armed forces of the nation. Most important of all, the powerful Blair clan approved of him.82

The situation in Missouri at the time of Fremont's appointment would have overwhelmed an expert in logistics, not alone the inexperienced, Fremont belonging to the latter class. There is not time to trace the bitter quarrels which arose among the various factions. It will suffice to say that Fremont alienated himself from the Blair clan by his vacillating actions. This coupled with his resentment towards the administration (Fremont was still plagued with the "persecution" complex, a relic of his court-martial days) caused him to make a move which was at first of beneficial political good, but which later influenced his career adversely.

This action consisted of Fremont's aligning himself with the administration "radicals," a group around Lincoln who were continually trying to hurt the latter's political chances. The immediate result of this alliance between Fremont and the radicals was that on August 30, 1861, the former caused a proclamation to be issued which established martial law in Missouri, freeing the

82. T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and the Radicals, p. 38.
slaves of all persons who were engaged in resisting the
government, and ordered the confiscation of their
property.

Because of the danger of alienating the northern and border state conservatives who would uphold a
war to restore the Union, but who would refuse, at this
stage of the conflict, to carry on a war conducted on
an anti-slavery crusade basis, Lincoln was forced to
ask Fremont to modify the section of his proclamation
dealing with slavery. Fremont refused, and the adminis-
tration issued an order countermanding that part of
the edict.83

In Fremont, the radicals saw a man whom they
could use as a lever against Lincoln. The radicals
were closely allied with the administration press. It
is also noteworthy to notice that the northern religious
groups at large were also closely tied up with the rad-
icals and the press. As a result, the preachers of New
York and Boston, in a series of sermons, flayed Lincoln
and upheld Fremont. Editors and party leaders spoke in
similar vein, and many prophesied ominously that Fremont
would supplant Lincoln as the Republican nominee

Frank Blair, Jr., and Fremont disagreed over party politics in Missouri because the former criticized the latter's awarding of contracts and his emancipation proclamation. Having the superior rank, Fremont placed Blair under military arrest, insubordination being the charge given.

Due to the strong pressure being brought to bear on Lincoln by the conservatives within the administration, Fremont was forced from his command on October 24, 1861. With his typical disgruntled attitude, Fremont went to New York, where he heard the radicals laud his proclamation before a great meeting at Cooper Union. 85

The significance of Fremont's actions, from a political viewpoint, is that for the moment he was in high favor with the radicals.

Fremont went before Congress where the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War had launched an investigation to ascertain whether or not he was incompetent as commander of the Western Department. The radical composition of the committee caused Fremont to be

84. R. J. Bartlett, Fremont and the Republican Party, pp. 74-75.

exonerated of the incompetency charges. 86

The House of Representatives, however, in a report based upon evidence obtained by a committee during the period from July, 1861, to July 10, 1862, showed that Fremont was both incompetent and unscrupulous. 87

In his next command, which was secured for him by the radicals, Fremont showed his military incompetency once again. This command was in the newly created Mountain Department. Due to a combination of circumstances, Fremont was removed from this command in the late summer of 1862.

The year 1863 saw Fremont's hopes of being restored to a command running alternately high and low. Lincoln, however, was successful in fending off radical pressure toward an appointment for Fremont and the latter languished in New York City.

As the year 1864 opened, there were several presidential aspirants in the field besides the indomitable Abraham Lincoln. The radicals were casting about for a successor to Lincoln. General Rosecrans had

seemed a good choice, at least to Greeley, but the former's military fiasco in Tennessee ruined his chances.

Another candidate was Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury in Lincoln's own cabinet. He curried the favor of Greeley and other radicals, but did not have their unqualified support because they were carefully watching popular reaction to his boom.

Now, upon the troubled horizon came the irrepresible Fremont once more. No longer the dashing figure of ten years previous, somewhat more politically intelligent, Fremont knew his name could still obtain votes.88

Urged on by the intrepid Jessie, he announced in the spring his willingness to accept a nomination if offered. The Chase faction encouraged the Fremont boom, working on the assumption that it would collapse eventually, enabling them to take over its membership.

Fremont had strong support from the West, this being the anti-slavery Germans. In the East, he enjoyed the support of the New England abolitionists, headed by Wendel Phillips, who denounced both Chase and Lincoln, and advised his followers to vote for the "Pathfinder,"

88. A. Nevins, Fremont—Pathmarker of the West, p. 564.
the first general who was right on the great issue.®®

The first sign of an actual demonstration for Fremont came on March 19, 1864, when radicals and old-school abolitionists of New York came together at Cooper Union. The men in charge were, for the most part, politically obscure; however, the group pledged itself for the "Pathfinder."®°

There were two centers of disaffection within the radical element itself. These were in St. Louis and New York. In St. Louis, it was composed of a small fraction of a faction, those individuals who had been struggling with the Blairs for two years and had no intention of breaking off their relations with the Union party of the nation. It was a small fraction of their numbers which issued its call to the dissatisfied in the country. These persons communicated with a small club of like-minded persons in New York called the "Central Fremont Club" and invited them to meet in convention at Cleveland. Their object, as the call stated, was:

In order then and there to recommend the

89. Bartlett, op. cit., pp. 89-91

nomination of John C. Fremont for the Presidency of the United States, and to assist in organizing for his election.\textsuperscript{91}

Leaving the small faction of radicals momentarily, let us see how the redoubtable Chase and his presidential hopes were coming along. On March 5, 1864, Chase announced his resignation from the presidential race. This decision came as a result of a speech given by Frank Blair, Jr., on February 27 attacking Chase's administration of the Treasury Department.\textsuperscript{92}

There were still elements, however, in the party which would not concede anything to its fellow members. After Chase's downfall, some forces began pushing forth General Ben Butler as a prospective candidate. The conservative Edward Bates heard rumors that the Missouri radicals were lining up for Fremont.\textsuperscript{93}

While the radicals in the administration as such were undecided as to what procedure to follow, the radical element which favored Fremont took direct action. As it will be remembered, this radical element comprised the Germans from St. Louis and the

\textsuperscript{92} Williams, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 312.
\textsuperscript{93} E. Bates, \textit{Diary}, entry of March 19, 1864, p. 349.
abolitionists from New England. Realizing that Lincoln was almost certain of the Republican nomination, they decided to present Fremont as the candidate of a third party.

It was a highly disgruntled group of delegates that assembled in Cleveland on May 31, 1864. Almost every oppositional faction to the administration was there, from abolitionist to disgusted Democrat. Suffice to say that the convention proceedings touched both comedy and dramatic pathos.94

Some of the highlights of the radical platform adopted at Cleveland were: a call for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery in all the states, loyal or rebellious; a reconstruction policy, to be formulated by Congress, which would protect the rights of freedmen; a single term for the presidency; and the confiscation of the lands of rebels and their distribution among soldiers and settlers.95

The candidates selected by the delegates for

   E. McPherson, Political History of the United States During the Great Rebellion, p. 413.
the offices of the president and vice-president were Fremont and Cochrane. Fremont's acceptance letter is peculiarly important because of his indecisiveness in reaching his decision to accept the nomination. In it, Fremont stated that he did not believe confiscation extended to the property of all rebels was practicable. He agreed with the constitutional amendment proposal of the convention. He cleverly stated that he was for any man nominated by the convention who could do something for the country, but he emphatically denied that Lincoln was the man for this purpose. Lastly, Fremont stated the "anxiety" that was caused him by resigning his army commission though: "I had for a long time fruitlessly endeavored to obtain service." All in all, it was not a "great" acceptance speech.96

For the moment, Fremont's nomination was regarded by Lincoln's supporters with comparative indifference. Someone told the President that Fremont supporters had assembled at Cleveland to place him in nomination, and that there were about four hundred of them. Lincoln's knowledge of the Bible stood him in good stead when he turned to it and read I Samuel

And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men.97

Lincoln had ample reason for feeling politically secure for the moment. This was the month of June, 1864; Sherman was centering his operations upon Atlanta; Grant was facing Lee on the Chickahominy.

As the summer wore on, the position of Fremont in the political picture had changed. Lincoln had been secure during the month of June, but, with the military losses suffered by the North during the months of July and August, however, his stock went down and Fremont's went correspondingly upward.

During the time that Lincoln was basking in the public's favor, Fremont, as mentioned previously, was not considered too seriously by Lincoln supporters. With the sudden decline in Lincoln's popularity, the political situation began to look different.

Perhaps the crux of the Republican problem was the following. If the people wanted "Old Abe," there was nothing that the opposition in the

administration could do about it. However, with Lincoln's popularity steadily declining after the summer reverses suffered by the Northern armies, the nomination of Fremont at Cleveland, which the majority of the radicals had tolerated only as a prod to Lincoln, was now getting away from them. In a word, the radicals could, by their "bolting" tactics, that is, by trying to split the party wide open, give the ever-ready Democrats a chance to slip into power.

It was obvious, even to the narrow-viewed radicals that the followers of Fremont were in earnest. A good indication of this was in Illinois, where the German element, always friendly to Fremont, announced their non-support of Lincoln and commenced organizing the Fremont clubs once again.98

Also, there was no doubt that Fremont would poll a large vote, probably in a state likely to be close in the balloting. The experts also recalled with political shivers what third party candidates had done in the elections of 1844 and 1848.

If a complete picture of Fremont's effect upon the campaign of 1864 is to be gained, it is necessary

that all of the major moves of the initial stages be discussed.

During the latter part of August, the Democrats held their national convention in Chicago. They nominated General McClellan as their candidate for the presidency. The party platform was essentially of a peace nature written by a copperhead, C. L. Vallandigham. The prospect of having these two supposedly pro-Confederacy men in the White House scared the Republican radicals into thinking seriously before doing anything which would help the Democratic party win the presidency.

The Democrats hailed the party's platform and candidates with great enthusiasm. Before the committee on notification received its reply from McClellan, however, the tide of the war changed strongly in favor of the North. McClellan repudiated the resolution in the party platform which declared the war to be a failure.99

Needless to say, the damage had been done; the Tribune and Beecher's Independent came out flying Lincoln's colors rather than support a party of disunion.100

100. Smith, _op. cit._, p. 283.
General Sherman dealt a paralyzing blow to the Democratic party when, on September 2, 1864, word came that he had captured Atlanta. This action had its effect also on the Republican radicals; now was the time for them to close their ranks.

The Republicans knew that they could not run the risk of a split within their party. If this happened, the Democrats had a very good chance of slipping into the White House. To them, Lincoln was the best possible candidate at the time—something must be done in order that his election would be assured. This left only one alternative, to remove Fremont from the field.

Before the elements within the Republican party were to be conciliated, someone within the cabinet must be sacrificed in order that their political vanities might be restored. The radicals, smarting under the admonishments which some of their members, particularly Wade and Garfield, had received from their constituents because of their ill-timed scheming, were casting about for a whipping boy. Perhaps the ablest candidate for this unenviable honor was young Montgomery Blair, Postmaster-General of the United States.

If possible, Montgomery Blair had more enemies
within the administration than his brother Frank. The now famous sixth resolution of the Republican party platform of 1864, inspired by the radicals, had been aimed specifically at him:

Resolved. That we deem it essential to the general welfare that harmony should prevail in the National Councils, and we regard as worthy of public confidence and official trust those only who cordially endorse the principles proclaimed in these resolutions and which should characterize the administration of the Government. 101

During the summer of 1864 Montgomery Blair had given Lincoln his promise that, if the latter so desired for the welfare of the party, he could have his resignation at any time. Lincoln refrained from doing this in spite of radical pressure being exerted on him. His chief motive seemed to be that he was using Blair as a counterpoise against the radicals.

The next logical step would seemingly be that Lincoln, now pressed for election by the intrepid "Pathfinder," was looking around for a way to stop the latter's candidacy. So, now Lincoln was willing to sacrifice Blair, this being done to appease the radicals. With Blair out of the cabinet, Fremont, knowing that a hated enemy had gone down in defeat, would now

retreat from a hopeless personal cause.

Fremont's aspirations had suffered severely. This was because of the following: During August, when the North was virtually engulfed in a wave of defeatism, he had attempted to strengthen his position by coming out boldly for compensated emancipation and committing himself more or less to a negotiated peace.102

Victories by the North in August and September made it almost impossible for Fremont to reinstate himself with the original platform as adopted by the Cleveland convention. Privately he announced his withdrawal from the race some five days before the publication of his formal renunciation.103

The "Lincoln-Blair-Fremont Bargain of 1864" has conjured up speculative theories by many of America's foremost historians. The "bargain" has indeed an interesting history of its own. Because of the effects, alleged and otherwise, which it has had on the political coloring of Fremont's life, we must examine it very closely.

The first school of thought on the

102. Ibid., p. 426.
103. Ibid.
"Lincoln-Blair-Fremont Bargain of 1864" are those individuals who subscribe to the following interpretation: that Zachariah Chandler was the one person who tried most to organize elements within the party as the election of 1864 approached.

The first part of Chandler's plan was to secure the support of Wade and Davis for Lincoln in return for the dismissal of Montgomery Blair. The second part of the Chandler plan was to use Lincoln's concession with regard to Blair as a lever for removing Fremont from the campaign. A protracted interview with Fremont leaders in New York resulted in the striking of a bargain. Fremont was to accept the removal of Blair as enough of a reward for his retiring from the election. Then, returning to Washington, Chandler went to the White House; there he told Lincoln of his talks with the Fremont leaders in New York. In due course of time, the bargain was carried out by both sides.104

Another interpretation of the "bargain" is that Chandler had approached Fremont for the purpose of bargaining, not only promising the removal of Blair but also the restoration of Fremont to a high command in the army. However, Fremont, after a week's thought on the proposition, now refused it. Under the persuasion of his advisers, he announced his withdrawal for the welfare of the party.\footnote{A. Nevins, \textit{Fremont-The West's Greatest Adventurer}, Vol. II, pp. 664-685.}

Still another interpretation handled the "bargain" in a different light. The essence of this argument is as follows. By the end of August and the first part of September, the radicals realized that if Fremont were in the field, his vote, even though it might be small, would certainly be the margin of difference between defeat and victory in certain states and in the election as a whole. The surest way of reconciling the radicals such as Sumner and Wade would be to secure Blair's removal, at the same time promising Fremont re-employment in the army or appointment in the cabinet so that he would thereby abandon his candidacy. Lincoln was for the plan, it being hard to believe that he intended to hold out against the aforementioned sixth
resolution of the party platform.

According to this particular interpretation, it appears that Fremont was on the lookout for something definite to cling to after his ill-timed letter on compensated emancipation. A political deal with Lincoln, whom he disliked heartily and who, he believed, had used him badly, was naturally, distasteful. Therefore, Fremont, through a former staff member, a man named Justus McKinstry, who was in communication with a Colonel Marcy, father-in-law of McClellan, started his intrigue. McKinstry, through his contact with McClellan, indirect of course since it would be a case of Fremont to McKinstry to Marcy to McClellan, would be able to satisfy Fremont's plans. Fremont seems to have thought that an agreement with McClellan had great possibilities, for if, as seemed to be the case, Lincoln was depending upon Fremont votes for re-election, those same votes could elect McClellan and place himself in the position of kingmaker. Furthermore, by placing McClellan in the White House, Fremont would be able to square his account with Lincoln.

Unfortunately for Fremont, McClellan apparently ignored his overtures completely. There was then only one thing left for him to do. This was to withdraw in
favor of the Republicans. By doing this, Fremont would be in the position to do several of many things. First, he could pose as a self-sacrificing patriot, which was a favorite pose with him. Next, he could place the party under obligations to him for the future and at the same time rebuke McClellan. Lastly, Fremont could preserve his self-esteem by denouncing Lincoln himself. Therefore his letter of withdrawal was published on September 22.

The climax of this interpretation is related in the following. On September 23, Lincoln called for Blair's resignation. Here was the moment that Lincoln was waiting for. The radicals were now subdued. The Republican press hammered home to the people that the Democrats were selling out to the Confederacy. There was no reason to believe that Blair would not have been dismissed on September 23 regardless of Fremont's action.106

The present writer, after taking into consideration the interpretations mentioned, has now arrived at a conclusion of his own. This is as follows. There is no doubt that Zachariah Chandler was the "contact"

man between the radicals in the administration and Fremont. All discussion on the "bargain" issue is in complete harmony on this point. There is evidence that Fremont had, at one time, considered the possibility of withdrawing in favor of McClellan, the purpose being to sharpen the eagerness of Lincoln's friends to buy his friendship. The writer is inclined to go along with the interpretation that has Fremont refusing after receiving the inducements of a prospective cabinet or army appointment. Two sets of manuscripts, Fremont's and McClellan's, offer proof of this. The tone of the Fremont manuscripts is that Fremont was offered patronage to his friends and disfavor to his enemies; however, he refused.107

of a cabinet position and the end of the Blairs "if he would withdraw and advocate Lincoln." Fremont had replied that this was an insult.108

The last additional piece of evidence showing that Fremont rejected the proposed "bargain" plan is the tone of his withdrawal letter:

In respect to Mr. Lincoln, I continue to hold exactly the sentiments contained in my letter of acceptance. I consider that his administration has been politically, militarily, and financially a failure, and its necessary continuance is a cause of regret for the country.109

This is definitely the statement of a man who had refused to "bargain." For had he arrived at a collusion with Lincoln's supporters, the tone of the above would have been less belligerent. Impetuous as he was, Fremont, had he arrived at an agreement with the radicals, would have never delivered such a stinging rebuke to Lincoln.

From the above, it would seem that Fremont preferred the least of two evils, Lincoln. For had McClellan been elected on the peace platform of his party, the worst possible thing would have happened to the Union, the election of an emissary of a peace

108. Ibid., p. 580. Footnote showing the entry of September 22, 1864, in the McClellan MSS.

party. No one has been able to prove that Fremont was against the spirit of the Union even in his bitter court-martial moments. That Fremont was a "Union" man in the fullest sense of the term has never been disputed. Disgruntled as he might have been, Fremont, in his somewhat peculiar way, would not see the efforts of the war wasted by the election of a man supported by a peace platform.
Chapter V

AN ANALYSIS OF FREMONT AS
A POLITICAL PERSONAGE

Of the three campaigns which Fremont had his name associated with, it would naturally follow that he had the greatest influence in the election of 1856. Perhaps, when one looks back on the election of that year with its many diversifications, he would be right in saying so.

The election of 1860, as far as Fremont was concerned, is of little actual value. It is, as far as the research student is interested in, significant only because of the fact that the name of Fremont still held enough of the old time glamour so that he was still known. As it will be remembered, Fremont, in the years between 1856 and 1860, was mainly concerned with establishing his personal fortune in California.

To the present writer, of the three campaigns which the name of Fremont is associated with, the one of 1864 is definitely the most interesting. Regardless of whether the reader does or does not believe in a speculative theory as to a proposed "bargain" in this
particular campaign, it must be admitted that the repercussions as such would have been politically "soul-shaking" had Fremont stayed in the presidential race. If Fremont had not retired from the political scene, the voting scales might have tottered over in McClellan's favor.

If Fremont had been the only candidate of one party and Lincoln of another, as far as the election of 1864 is concerned, the latter would have won. As we have seen, however, the political maneuverings of that election were such that the Republicans were beset with problems of a varied nature. That is, up to approximately the last month and a half preceding the election, the party was split just enough so that a candidate such as Fremont, a man who had sufficient following to cause trouble, was able to keep the party in an uproar.

No other candidate in the election of 1864 could possibly have had the effect that Fremont did. Why was this so? Well, after all, what other candidate had managed to keep before the public eye as long? Though undoubtedly some of his actions had been ill-timed and advised, Fremont had still managed, consciously or unconsciously, to keep his name before the public.
Perhaps in this mentioned statement lies the weakness of Fremont.

Fremont was one of those rare individuals of that particular era, who, having sufficient momentum to get started on a project which seemed full of potential greatness for himself, was not able to finish it. Though we are told that he was not outwardly nervous while engaged in conversation, it would seem that he was being racked inwardly with mental anguish. Otherwise, there does not seem to be any accounting for some of his actions.

The present writer is inclined to believe that Fremont, in spite of his weaknesses, that is, in spite of a tendency of believe everything that his political advisers told him, was the best possible candidate for the Republicans in the campaign of 1856. He drew more votes than any other candidate for the party could have. Fremont did not lose the election of 1856 to a better man; he lost it to a cause which was greater than his party.

Fremont was the "spark" that the Republicans needed in order that their party might commence its entry into the national field with an auspicious debut.
The real indication of how the political winds were veering is described in the sage words of Thurlow Weed quoted elsewhere in this work.

Weed sensed the impropriety of sacrificing a man like Seward to a cause which was hopeless at this time. Weed, as it will be remembered, felt that the Republicans were too new in their party organization and that the Democrats would miscue so much by 1860 that his party could not possibly fail in the election of that year.

No man but Fremont, with his dashing background, could have done so much for the hopeless Republican cause of 1856. Without Fremont, the Republican party, with its potential candidates of a radical nature, would never have managed to dent the slavery issue.


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REMARKS ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The most important sources for the role enjoyed by Fremont in the political campaigns of 1856, 1860, and 1864 are in A. Nevins, *Fremont-Pathmarker of the West*, *Fremont-The West's Greatest Adventurer* (2 vols.) and C. Goodwin, *John Charles Fremont*. Nevins deals with Fremont in a sympathetic manner while Goodwin is decidedly critical.

The two most important campaign biographies of Fremont are C. W. Upham's *Life, Explorations and Public Services of John Charles Fremont* and John Bigelow's *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of John Charles Fremont*. Both biographies are prejudiced in Fremont's favor. The latter biography contains some excellent narrative description about Fremont's feats.

Fremont's own *Memoirs of My Life* is based directly upon his reports. It is only a fair work and must be watched carefully because of the author's apparent readiness to vindicate himself.

T. Harry Williams' excellent book, *Lincoln and the Radicals*, although obviously written in a critical vein, gives invaluable information as to
Fremont's position with those fascinating characters called the "radicals" who surrounded Lincoln during the trying Civil War days.

W. E. Smith's *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics* is of high value because it traces Fremont's actions with the Blair family all through the difficult days of Fremont's political and military career.

Thomas Hart Benton's *Thirty Years Views* must be carefully evaluated, as far as Fremont is concerned, because of the obvious family relationship.

Although most of her works were read by the present writer, Jessie Fremont's works were not included because of their obvious partisan feelings towards her husband.