

Pittsburg State University

## Pittsburg State University Digital Commons

---

Electronic Theses & Dissertations

---

Spring 5-13-2023

### THE RAILSPLITTER AND THE PATHFINDER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JOHN C. FRÉMONT

Kourtney Yantis

Pittsburg State University, kourtneyyantis@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/etd>



Part of the American Politics Commons, Constitutional Law Commons, Cultural History Commons, Law and Politics Commons, Military History Commons, Military, War, and Peace Commons, Political History Commons, President/Executive Department Commons, Social History Commons, State and Local Government Law Commons, United States History Commons, and the Women's History Commons

---

#### Recommended Citation

Yantis, Kourtney, "THE RAILSPLITTER AND THE PATHFINDER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JOHN C. FRÉMONT" (2023). *Electronic Theses & Dissertations*. 459.  
<https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/etd/459>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@pittstate.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@pittstate.edu).

THE RAILSPLITTER AND THE PATHFINDER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JOHN C. FRÉMONT

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Kourtney L. Yantis

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

April 2023

THE RAILSPLITTER AND THE PATHFINDER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JOHN C. FRÉMONT

Kourtney L. Yantis

APPROVED:

Thesis Advisor \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Christopher Childers, Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences

Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kirstin Lawson, Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences

Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Cheryl Giefer, Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people who have helped get me to this point in my academic career that I would be remiss not to thank them individually.

First and foremost, my family has been my rock throughout this process. To my mom and dad, thank you for your support, encouragement, and for driving me to succeed. I cannot express how much it has meant to me. To my husband, Caden, thank you for standing by me even while I was in the trenches of writing and researching.

To my ever-helpful advisor, Dr. Christopher Childers, thank you for your guidance and encouragement throughout the process, and for always replying to my long-winded emails. And a special thanks to my committee members- Dr. Kirstin Lawson and Dr. Cheryl Giefer. I could not have completed this thesis without the help of my committee.

Finally, I would like to thank one very special person who contributed to this thesis in ways he could not have imagined. To the memory of my stepdad, Tim- our conversation about going back to school together was the catalyst for my decision to return to graduate studies after taking time off. Although you were not able to finish your degree, I am finishing mine for myself, but also for you. Thank you for everything you did for me while you were here.

This thesis is dedicated to two Lincolns. While the President initially inspired me, my daughter inspired me to complete the task.

# THE RAILSPLITTER AND THE PATHFINDER: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JOHN C. FRÉMONT

An Abstract of the Thesis by  
Kourtney L. Yantis

This study serves as an analysis of the connections between Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States and John Charles Frémont as a Civil War general. Lincoln's position within history is solid, unlike that of John C. Frémont. The thesis will elevate Frémont to a higher status as a historical figure by arguing that the emancipation edict that he issued for Missouri in August of 1861 would influence Abraham Lincoln's preliminary emancipation proclamation of September 1862, even though Lincoln repealed Frémont's decree. In biographies of each man, their interactions are merely a small part of the stories of their lives, but the interconnected nature of their Civil War experiences shaped the process of emancipation in the United States. Fully understanding the ways in which emancipation unfolded, and how John C. Frémont contributed to that, can allow for a less biased understanding of emancipation's history, and restore to its rightful place the names of those who helped guide the way. Abraham Lincoln did not initially intend to emancipate all slaves in the South. And although the proclamation was his, the people who helped form it deserve commendation for their role in shaping history. Nor was John C. Frémont an entirely commendable figure, but was instead one who made many mistakes. Studying the relationship between these men can illuminate another side of Lincoln that is frequently glossed over, and can also show Frémont's strengths and weaknesses, rather than merely looking at one side of the story, as many histories have done.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LINCOLN AND FRÉMONT IN HISTORIOGRAPHY	12
III. FRÉMONT IN THE WEST	25
IV. AN EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION	34
V. LINCOLN VERSUS FRÉMONT	51
VI. CONCLUSION	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY	70

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Although their paths would not cross until the 1856 Presidential election, John C. Frémont and Abraham Lincoln shared many similarities in their upbringings. Both were self-made men, born into poverty in the American South. Both were involved in the earliest formation of the Republican Party, and they ran as the party's first and second Presidential candidates, respectively. However, there were also stark differences in their backgrounds. Frémont would become a celebrity and then ride his wave of popularity to a failed Presidential bid. Lincoln would secure the highest office in the land as a relatively obscure national figure on the coattails of a new party that was challenging the slave power of the South. Despite their shared humble beginnings, their paths would diverge through the first few decades of their lives before colliding in the Civil War to create American emancipation.

John Charles Frémont's upbringing was at the center of controversy during the 1856 election and has led some historians to trace the roots of his often-poor decision-making to a shattered childhood.<sup>1</sup> Frémont was born January 21, 1813, in Savannah, Georgia, to Charles Frémon (John would add the "t" to his own last name later in his

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Rolle, *John Charles Frémont: Character as Destiny* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 181-82.

adult life) and Anne Beverly Whiting Pryor, a married woman who had left her husband and had an affair with Frémont.<sup>2</sup> Frémont's salacious birth story made headlines when he ran for President, leaving John desperate to prove his legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> Marital status notwithstanding, Frémont was raised by his parents until age five when his father died, leaving his mother to raise the Frémont children in poverty.<sup>4</sup> However, Frémont would prove more than capable of rising above his situation.

Frémont was a gifted child, particularly in science, but also exhibited a wild streak that saw him kicked out of school for poor attendance.<sup>5</sup> However, his abilities attracted the attention of various patrons, including Joel Poinsett, who helped secure him a naval position.<sup>6</sup> After resigning from the navy, Frémont joined the Army Topographical Corps of Engineers with a desire to stand out and explore. Upon Poinsett's appointment to Martin Van Buren's cabinet, he obtained an apprenticeship for Frémont under Joseph Nicollet, a famed French explorer.<sup>7</sup> Frémont's explorations with Nicollet would shape the rest of his career, not only as an explorer but as a politician and general as well. For those explorations would bring him into contact with Thomas Hart Benton, a Senator from Missouri who also happened to be a father to a beautiful teenage daughter.

Jessie Anne Benton was sixteen years old when she met twenty-seven-year-old John C. Frémont.<sup>8</sup> Within a few years, after Frémont was sent on another expedition in an

---

<sup>2</sup> Allan Nevins, *Frémont: Pathmarker of the West* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1939), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 446; Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 5, 169.

<sup>4</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 14-16.

<sup>6</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2002), 59-60.

<sup>8</sup> Sally Denton, *Passion and Principle: John and Jessie Frémont, The Couple Whose Power, Politics, and Love Shaped Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), xii.

effort by Senator Benton to keep him away from Jessie, the two would elope.<sup>9</sup> The circumstances of their marriage would also rear their head in the 1856 election, as they were married by a Catholic priest, despite neither of them being Catholic.<sup>10</sup> The marriage produced five children, three of whom survived to adulthood.<sup>11</sup> Jessie would also become a fierce ally for her husband, often being the driving force behind his political ambitions, and even going toe to toe with the President of the United States on her husband's behalf.

Known to many as Jessie's husband after their marriage, John C. Frémont had the desire to make a name for himself and undertook five expeditions to the West from 1842 to 1854.<sup>12</sup> It was during this time that Frémont obtained the nickname "The Pathfinder".<sup>13</sup> On one of those expeditions, Frémont gained the notoriety he so craved by becoming embroiled in the Bear Flag Revolt, which led to a court-martial for failing to follow the orders of Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny.<sup>14</sup> As a result of Frémont's court-martial conviction, he was given a dishonorable discharge, which was quickly commuted by President Polk on behalf of the Bentons.<sup>15</sup> However, Frémont was not fully vindicated by the President's order as Polk upheld the charges while commuting his dismissal. Frémont, therefore, resigned his commission entirely and relocated with Jessie and the

---

<sup>9</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 59.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Inskeep, *Imperfect Union: How Jessie and John Frémont Mapped the West, Invented Celebrity, and Helped Cause the Civil War* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020), 37.

<sup>11</sup> For the best coverage of John and Jessie's children, see Denton's *Passion and Principle*. Their children were: Elizabeth Benton Frémont, known as Lily, Benton Frémont (died as an infant), John Charles Frémont, Jr., Anne Beverly Frémont (died as an infant) and Francis Preston Frémont.

<sup>12</sup> John Bicknell, *Lincoln's Pathfinder: John C. Frémont and the Violent Election of 1856* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2017), ix.

<sup>13</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Inskeep, *Imperfect Union*, 151-63, 172-76.

<sup>15</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 104.

children to California.<sup>16</sup> By now, Frémont's expeditions and the publications of his accounts of them (assisted by Jessie) had made him a notable celebrity. Therefore, when the Republican Party needed a new candidate for President in 1856, Frémont stepped forward at the behest of the powerful Blair family.<sup>17</sup>

Frémont had become the protégé of Francis Preston Blair Sr. and his family in the 1850s largely due to his marriage to Jessie. Francis Blair and Thomas Hart Benton were distant cousins yet close friends, and their children shared that connection, with Jessie even referring to Francis as "Father Blair."<sup>18</sup> Blair's daughter Elizabeth would become good friends with Jessie, and their correspondence sheds a fascinating light on the connections between the Benton and Blair families. At one point, there was even talk of a match between Francis Blair Jr., or Frank Blair, and Jessie Benton. Her elopement with John C. Frémont shattered those plans, but after Senator Benton began to welcome Frémont as his son-in-law, he was equally embraced by the Blairs.<sup>19</sup> A celebrity in his own right due to his explorations, married into politics, and with no public record on the slavery debate, Frémont seemed an excellent candidate when the elder Blair began looking for a Presidential hopeful.

Francis Blair Sr. was no stranger to politics by the time of the 1856 Presidential election. He had been a close ally of Andrew Jackson but eventually left the Democratic Party due to his desire to stop the westward expansion of slavery, helping to form the Republican Party instead.<sup>20</sup> Blair and his sons, Frank Jr. and Montgomery, would play

---

<sup>16</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 112.

<sup>17</sup> Bicknell, *Lincoln's Pathfinder*, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 421; Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 233.

<sup>20</sup> Grace N. Taylor, "The Blair Family in the Civil War," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 38, no. 125 (October 1940): 283-84.

huge roles in the career of John C. Frémont, but their stories became interconnected when Blair put forward Frémont's name as the candidate for the new party.<sup>21</sup> But, not all Democrats jumped ship with Blair, and Thomas Hart Benton vehemently opposed his son-in-law in the 1856 election, to Jessie's dismay.<sup>22</sup> The lack of support from Benton, in addition to accusations of Catholicism, birth out of wedlock, and the looming shame of the court-martial, all piled together to put James Buchanan in the Oval Office over Frémont. After his loss, Frémont returned to California and poured his time into running his estate, *Las Mariposas*.<sup>23</sup> It is unclear whether he carried with him any further political ambitions at that time. Regardless of how Frémont felt personally, the Republican Party would have to wait for its day in the sun.

The Republicans would ultimately find success in the form of another antislavery Southern-born man who had moved North and made a name for himself. Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in Kentucky to Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln.<sup>24</sup> Similarly to Frémont, Lincoln would face criticism for his heritage, as his mother was likely an illegitimate child.<sup>25</sup> Unlike Frémont, however, such criticisms did not harm Lincoln's efforts at high office. But he certainly did not always aspire to that. Lincoln, like Frémont, lost a parent at a young age when his mother died in 1818. Although devastated by the loss, Lincoln threw himself into work for his family, and later on a flatboat down the Mississippi.<sup>26</sup> It was here that Lincoln first encountered slavery up

---

<sup>21</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 233.

<sup>22</sup> Pamela Herr and Mary Lee Spence, "'I Really Had Something Like the Blues': Letters from Jessie Benton Frémont to Elizabeth Blair Lee, 1847-1883," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 23-4.

<sup>23</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 459.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald C. White, Jr., *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009), 16.

<sup>25</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020), 7.

<sup>26</sup> White, Jr., *A. Lincoln*, 39.

close, which may have helped solidify the antislavery attitudes that he had inherited from his father.<sup>27</sup> However, Lincoln did not aspire to be a migrant farmer like his father and soon moved to Illinois to work.<sup>28</sup> During his adolescence, Lincoln worked several odd jobs, including splitting rails, which would later lead to the moniker given to him in the 1860 Presidential election, “The Railsplitter”.<sup>29</sup> After working in a general store and a few forays into local politics, Lincoln decided to teach himself law.<sup>30</sup> He quickly discovered he had an aptitude for it, and made a name for himself as a prairie lawyer.

In addition to law, Lincoln soon became interested in politics, entrenching himself firmly in the Whig camp. As a Whig, he served multiple terms in the Illinois state legislature beginning in 1832- the same year he fought as a captain in the Black Hawk War.<sup>31</sup> In 1842 he married Mary Todd, and their marriage resulted in four children.<sup>32</sup> Now well-established in Illinois and with a young family to support, Lincoln turned his eye to national politics and managed to get elected to a term in the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>33</sup> During his time in the House, Lincoln largely voted along Whig Party lines but became known for his “Spot Resolutions” in which he demanded to know the exact spot where the Mexican-American War began due to his opposition to it and many of President Polk’s policies.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps due to the unpopularity of these resolutions, his national political career seemed to come to an end after one term.

---

<sup>27</sup> Reynolds, *Abe*, 88-89.

<sup>28</sup> David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1995), 37.

<sup>29</sup> Reynolds, *Abe*, 473-74.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: A Biography of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 24-26.

<sup>31</sup> Reynolds, *Abe*, 126.

<sup>32</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 93, 95, 107, 154. Their children were Robert Todd Lincoln, known as Bob (survived to adulthood), Edward Baker Lincoln, known as Eddie (died aged four), William Wallace Lincoln, known as Willie (died aged nine), and Thomas Lincoln, known as Tad (died aged eighteen).

<sup>33</sup> Reynolds, *Abe*, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 79.

After his experience in Congress, Lincoln was at an impasse in his life. He eventually decided to quit politics and return to law for several years.<sup>35</sup> But the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, drew Lincoln back into the political scene, committing himself to the antislavery cause, and vehemently opposing the extension of slavery to the territories.<sup>36</sup> Lincoln feared the spread of the Southern slave power, and the newly formed Republican party soon drew him in. Although still loyal to the Whigs, Lincoln recognized that the party was imploding in the wake of the 1852 election and the Kansas-Nebraska Act and proceeded to become the face of Illinois Republicans.<sup>37</sup> He acted as a party man in the 1856 Presidential election, supporting a man he would eventually be at odds with.

Lincoln campaigned for John C. Frémont vigorously in 1856. Lincoln had a partisan zeal and took to the stump on Frémont's behalf, delivering more than fifty speeches in Illinois alone.<sup>38</sup> Not confining himself to the boundaries of his adopted state, Lincoln toured the country at the behest of the Republican Party. He even went as far as to go to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for a meeting on Frémont's behalf.<sup>39</sup> This does not mean, however, that he saw everything in the same way as Frémont, especially on issues pertaining to abolition, but merely that he was true to his new party and wanted to see success. In fact, Lincoln was somewhat disheartened that Frémont had obtained the nomination, for he thought him too radical on slavery.<sup>40</sup> But this did not stop Lincoln's campaign efforts.

---

<sup>35</sup> White, Jr., *A. Lincoln*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 170-71.

<sup>37</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006), 186.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 1198.

<sup>39</sup> Poster from Frémont Head Quarters, 1856, #1967, Box 2, John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont Papers, 1828-1980, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>40</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 1191.

Lincoln knew that for Frémont to succeed on behalf of all Republicans, he would have to help sell him, despite reservations. Lincoln's focus in terms of slavery at this point was stopping its expansion out West, and he embraced neither abolitionism nor conservatism completely.<sup>41</sup> Frémont's focus was on abolishing slavery, as he would make clear during the Civil War.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, many saw Frémont as an abolitionist, whose election would be dangerous for the country and was bound to lead to civil war.<sup>43</sup> This was exactly why his own father-in-law refused to support him. Lincoln did his best to downplay the abolitionist talk, and to try to draw in supporters from the "Know Nothing" Party that were supporting third-party candidate Millard Fillmore.<sup>44</sup> Lincoln feared that Fillmore's candidacy would draw voters away from Frémont and hand the election to the Democratic challenger, James Buchanan. Lincoln's fear would ultimately be realized, despite his hope that he could convince Illinoisans to vote Republican.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps if Lincoln had been the Vice-Presidential candidate, Illinois's vote would have been different.

Once Frémont became the Republican candidate, a Vice Presidential nominee was next on the agenda. Many even considered Lincoln as an option for this position.<sup>46</sup> During the vote at the national convention, Lincoln came in second to William Dayton, who became the nominee on the ill-fated ticket.<sup>47</sup> Had Lincoln run with Frémont, and the

---

<sup>41</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 85.

<sup>42</sup> Vernon L. Volpe, "The Frémonts and Emancipation in Missouri," *The Historian* 56, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 345.

<sup>43</sup> Douglas R. Egerton, "The Slaves' Election: Frémont, Freedom, and the Slave Conspiracies of 1856," *Civil War History* 61, no 1 (March 2015): 60.

<sup>44</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 1209, 1199.

<sup>45</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 1213.

<sup>46</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 128.

<sup>47</sup> Bicknell, *Lincoln's Pathfinder*, 185.

Republicans still failed to secure the White House, he may not have been successful at a later run for the Presidency, and the late nineteenth century may have looked dramatically different. In the end, Illinois and the nation at large would vote Democratic, but it was not a bad showing for a new party, nor was it a bad way for an up-and-coming politician from Illinois to gain national attention. Despite the best efforts of Lincoln and the Republican Party, it was not enough to secure the Presidency in 1856. They would find much more success four years later.

In the interim, Lincoln made a name for himself nationally in 1858 during the Lincoln-Douglas debates. By taking on Democratic Stephen Douglas, author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act that had launched Lincoln back into politics, Lincoln publicly committed to his antislavery stance. Lincoln and Douglas were both running for a seat from Illinois in the U.S. Senate when the debates took place.<sup>48</sup> The famed oratories consisted of seven rounds of debates across the state, with each man achieving some degree of success over the other at various points.<sup>49</sup> In the end, Douglas would win the seat.<sup>50</sup> But the stage was set for a much bigger competition two years later- the competition for the White House.

By 1860 it seemed clear to many that Stephen Douglas would not be satisfied with his Senate seat and would seek the Presidency under the Democratic mantle. Therefore, the Republicans needed to run someone who could successfully challenge him, and the slave power he seemed to represent. There is little evidence to suggest that the highest Republican leadership considered running Frémont for a second time,

---

<sup>48</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 152-60.

<sup>49</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 215-24.

<sup>50</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 160.

especially as he had left politics to return to his business investments in California.<sup>51</sup> Instead, they turned their attention to someone who had clear Presidential ambitions, even back in 1856- William Henry Seward. Seward's political manager, Thurlow Weed, opted not to put his man up for the candidacy in 1856, feeling that the first candidate for a new party would not succeed and not wanting to tarnish Seward's chances at future victory.<sup>52</sup> But the time was ripe in 1860, and Seward was a frontrunner and may have secured the nomination, if not for an overly aggressive abolitionist speech he had made in 1858. Seward's feelings towards slavery were well-known, and when he called the growing divides between North and South an "irrepressible conflict," it seemed to many that he had become too radical to be electable.<sup>53</sup> The Republicans needed someone new.

Abraham Lincoln checked many of the boxes that the Republican leadership was looking for in a candidate and obtained the nomination for the Presidency at the 1860 Republican National Convention. Although there were several setbacks on the path to his nomination he eventually triumphed over the likes of Seward and Edward Bates, both of whom he would put into his cabinet.<sup>54</sup> Once he became the Republican candidate, the path to the White House opened up as the Democrats imploded themselves with infighting.<sup>55</sup> Although this victory would lead to secession due to Lincoln's unpopularity in the South, many in the North were pleased with the triumph of the Republican Party, even if their new President seemed somewhat of an obscure figure.

---

<sup>51</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 470.

<sup>52</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 187.

<sup>53</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 191-92.

<sup>54</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 250; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 285.

<sup>55</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 184.

President Lincoln would not remain in obscurity for long, as the Civil War broke out less than a month after his inauguration. Nor was John C. Frémont an obscure figure even after he resigned from politics. His doings continued to be reported on, such as his trip to Europe in early 1861 in an attempt to purchase supplies for what he viewed, correctly, as an impending war.<sup>56</sup> When the war came, Frémont quickly sent the commander-in-chief an offer to rejoin the military. Lincoln had already had Frémont in mind for a role in his administration, likely due to his fame and his legacy as the first standard bearer of the Republican Party.<sup>57</sup> Although he considered Frémont for both Secretary of War and ambassador to France, he had been persuaded to make other appointments.<sup>58</sup> So, when Frémont offered his services, Lincoln could not pass up the opportunity he felt was being presented. So too, the Blair family was maneuvering to get Frémont a command, and Lincoln could not turn down such powerful allies.<sup>59</sup> And so the stage was set for Frémont to take command of the Department of the West, become a military hero, and help Lincoln quickly win the Civil War. Destiny and history, however, had other ideas.

---

<sup>56</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 190.

<sup>57</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 470-71.

<sup>58</sup> For recommendations for Frémont to a Cabinet position, see Charles Billingham to Abraham Lincoln, November 14, 1860; J.A. Barnes to Abraham Lincoln, January 7, 1861; M.T. Sweney to Abraham Lincoln, February 4, 1861; William H. Seward to Abraham Lincoln, December 25, 1860; A. Oakey Hall to Abraham Lincoln, November 29, 1860; and Leonard Swett to Abraham Lincoln, December 31, 1860 all in Abraham Lincoln Papers Digital Collections, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/abraham-lincoln-papers>. For Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward's discussion of Frémont as ambassador to France, see Abraham Lincoln to William H. Seward, March 11, 1861 and William H. Seward to Abraham Lincoln, March 11, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers.

<sup>59</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 389.

## CHAPTER II

### LINCOLN AND FRÉMONT IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

While Abraham Lincoln is one of the most studied men in history and the historiography surrounding him is immense, John C. Frémont continues to be seen as largely a side character- not always as a historical figure in his own right, but often just one of Lincoln's Civil War generals. In the context of Lincoln's life, Frémont played the role of political rival and military general, but he was also a notable explorer, Western expansionist, and, many would argue, an abolitionist. Upon closer inspection, Frémont, like Lincoln, is a fascinating figure. Frémont was a controversial individual during his own time and remains so today. Although his Western exploits were significant and deserve study, Civil War scholars interested in Frémont's life tend to focus on his time as a Union general, his controversial emancipation edict, and his unsuccessful bid for the 1864 Presidency. However, historians often study these points of interest only in the context of Frémont's relationship with Lincoln.

In analyzing the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and John C. Frémont, historians have largely been kind to Lincoln and have written a considerable amount about him, while Frémont scholars have been fewer in number and do not praise him nearly as much. Perhaps this is because Frémont's failures would often become Lincoln's successes, notably as a Republican presidential candidate and an emancipator. Upon

further examination, it seems that Frémont helped chart the course for emancipation by issuing his controversial edict in 1861, and while Lincoln was not then ready to commit to emancipation, it very likely influenced his later decision to free the slaves. But, Frémont does not get the credit for this from many historians, perhaps because he acted prematurely. As Lincoln himself noted in regards to Frémont, oftentimes the first to take up a cause is “not generally the best... to carry that movement to a successful issue.”<sup>1</sup> It is important to analyze the way that historians have compared these two men who reached for the same goals because the success of one and the failure of another has tended to push historians to see them as a hero and a villain when the reality is far more complex.

To study Lincoln and Frémont, it is necessary to first explore some general trends. Abraham Lincoln is undoubtedly more well-known than John C. Frémont. In fact, outside of academic circles and Lincoln studies, Frémont remains an obscure character. This is not to discount his successes as an explorer, but rather to state that his decision-making in his later life took away from his potentially great historical reputation. Perhaps Frémont deserves this, as his impulsive actions could have had catastrophic consequences for the Civil War and the nation had his emancipation proclamation alienated the border states. But, to some historians, his blunders far outweigh his exploratory prowess.

As historians have continued to study Frémont, there seems to be a polarity in their beliefs about his abilities. While many historians, such as Allan Nevins, Tom Chaffin, and Sally Denton, have all praised Frémont’s capabilities and focused on his successes in their biographies, others have studied him more from a place of Lincoln-

---

<sup>1</sup>Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), chap. 1, Kindle.

centric scholarship, and come up with different results.<sup>2</sup> In fact, many historians have cast Frémont as an antagonist standing in Lincoln's way. Examples include John G. Nicolay and John Hay in *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, Michael Burlingame in *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, and James Oakes in *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*.<sup>3</sup> Although some historians like John Bicknell, Tom Chaffin, and Allen C. Guelzo have alluded to Frémont as more of a harbinger of Lincoln's later successes, the villain trope has been difficult to shake.<sup>4</sup> While much has changed since the earliest days of Lincoln-Frémont historiography, some things remain the same, including the tendency to see Frémont as merely one villain in Lincoln's heroic battle.

Historians have long debated the nature of the Lincoln-Frémont relationship, but have largely done so in the context of Lincoln's life, rather than Frémont's. Historians have also had a more positive outlook in terms of Lincoln's legacy, and have tended to cast Frémont in a more negative light. Lincoln is one of the most studied figures in the history of the United States, and for good reason. His impact on the nation was overwhelmingly positive, and his Emancipation Proclamation will stand the test of time as one of the most important American documents. As historians write about Lincoln, they have sometimes resorted to hagiography, especially in the earliest years. But, most relatively balanced accounts of Lincoln's life see him as the hero of his story, and therefore often cast those who challenged him as villains. This includes John C. Frémont, who challenged Lincoln in many ways as a politician and a general.

---

<sup>2</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 548-49; Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 472; Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 334.

<sup>3</sup> John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (New York: The Century Co., 1890), vol. 4, chap. 23, Kindle; Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 2586; James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), chap. 5, Kindle.

<sup>4</sup> Bicknell, *Lincoln's Pathfinder*, xi; Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 472; Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, introduction, Kindle.

Most scholars are less kind to Frémont than they are to Lincoln in summarizing their relationship. Frémont is often portrayed as a bumbling, undeserving officer who only made a name for himself on the coattails of his wife's family. In reality, Frémont was a skilled explorer who, admittedly with his wife's sometimes detrimental intervention, obtained fame largely with his own strength. Indeed, he was unprepared for his Presidential run and was also underqualified for the office in the first place, but his shortcomings as a general did not necessarily have to do with his shortcomings as a politician, as many have suggested. And many historians have chosen to focus on those shortcomings instead of his successes, simply because it fits into the narrative of Frémont as the villain in Lincoln's story.

One of the first major works of Lincoln scholarship in regards to Frémont came in 1890 with *Abraham Lincoln: A History* by John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Lincoln's private secretaries. Their publication quickly became the seminal work in the field of Lincoln studies. Abraham Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, gave Nicolay and Hay exclusive access to Lincoln's papers, and their detailed research made them an authority on Lincoln's life. While they occasionally relied on their own experiences and memories of their time as Lincoln's secretaries, most of their information came from their own research.<sup>5</sup> Cited by many later historians, Nicolay and Hay's account of Lincoln's life was the premier source for Lincoln material until the publication of the Lincoln Papers by the Library of Congress in 1947 and *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* in 1953. Nicolay and Hay's work also described, in detail, the story of Abraham Lincoln and John C. Frémont in a scholarly fashion for the first time.

---

<sup>5</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 116, Kindle.

Unafraid to offer praise of Lincoln, Nicolay and Hay also do not hesitate to condemn those who crossed paths with him, including Frémont. The authors note Frémont's delay in arriving at his post as well as his ostentatiousness in conduct. They sharply criticize his decision not to reinforce General Nathaniel Lyon at Springfield, and unlike some later historians, claim he had the manpower to reinforce both Cairo and Springfield, thus blaming Frémont for Lyon's defeat. They also see his later lack of action in the Shenandoah Valley as largely preventable.<sup>6</sup> Some of their accusations also border on speculation, as they mention the possibility of Frémont having an Aaron Burr-like scheme to set up a Western dictatorship.<sup>7</sup> Nicolay and Hay also believe that Frémont's emancipation edict was solely published to save his popularity.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that Nicolay and Hay's work helped set the tone for later historians to see Lincoln as a positive figure and Frémont as a negative one. Despite the possibility that they may have let personal animosities color their description of Frémont, Nicolay and Hay's meticulous empirical research set the tone for further scholarship in the field of Lincoln and Frémont studies.

Empiricism and narrative have dominated scholarship on Lincoln and Frémont, especially during the pivotal decade of the 1930s. In 1936, Charles R. Wilson published a piece on the Lincoln-Blair-Frémont agreement of 1864 in which Frémont resigned from the Presidential race against Lincoln in exchange for the resignation of his enemy, Montgomery Blair, from Lincoln's cabinet. Wilson contradicted some of the early studies on Lincoln and Frémont by denying that a bargain involving Frémont ever explicitly took

---

<sup>6</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 5, chap. 22, Kindle.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, chap. 23, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, chap. 24, Kindle.

place. However, many later historians have rejected this interpretation and choose to believe that Frémont was involved in the negotiations, again falling into the idea of Frémont as a shady character.<sup>9</sup> One notable historian to challenge Wilson's viewpoint was T. Harry Williams, who discussed Frémont's relationship with the Radicals a few years after Wilson's work. Williams's focus was on how Frémont nestled himself in with the Radicals due to his beliefs regarding emancipation, and he diametrically opposed this with Lincoln's strained relationship with the Radicals.<sup>10</sup> Williams's focus was on Lincoln, however, with Frémont again relegated to the place of a problematic side character. While these empirically-based studies focused on Lincoln and Frémont together, the 1930s also saw the first full-length work on Frémont himself.

In studying Frémont, there is a clear divergence between those who see him as a hero and those who would portray him as a villain. Many of Frémont's biographers see him as a hero in his own right, worthy of a full-length study. Allan Nevins started this trend in 1939 with the publication of *Frémont: Pathmarker of the West*, which has become a frequently cited work among Frémont historians. Nevins's work is full of meticulous research and primary documents from the Frémont family, as he was given access to these papers by Frémont's son in his later years.<sup>11</sup> Nevins portrays Frémont as a heroic explorer, and a Civil War general foiled by the machinations of the Blair family.<sup>12</sup> He clearly sees Frémont as a sympathetic character- one who, although Nevins admits

---

<sup>9</sup> Charles R. Wilson, "New Light on the Lincoln-Blair-Fremont 'Bargain' of 1864," *American Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (October 1936): 71-78.

<sup>10</sup> T. Harry Williams, "Frémont and the Politicians," *Journal of the American Military Foundation* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1938): 178-91.

<sup>11</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, vii.

<sup>12</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 511.

had his shortcomings, deserves a fairer treatment than he had been given by Lincoln biographers at the turn of the century.

Another historian who was heavily influenced by the idea of Frémont as a hero, and by Nevins's work, was Tom Chaffin, who published *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire* in 2002. While Chaffin explores Frémont's western career in detail, he does dedicate a portion of his work to the Civil War saga, convincingly arguing that Frémont actually advanced the process of the Civil War by appointing Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>13</sup> Neither Nevins nor Chaffin fully exonerates Frémont of incompetence, with each holding that, although Frémont did a lot of good, his poor decision-making skills could not save his legacy from questions of ability.

Many historians have questioned Frémont's capabilities as a politician and general, with many framing him as a negative historical figure or, in the Civil War era, as a foil to Lincoln's successes. Historians who view Frémont in a negative light are certainly justified in their criticisms of him, as he did have many failures, but dismissing all his achievements is often a step too far. Unquestionably, Frémont did some good for his country, whether that be exploring the West, recognizing the potential in Ulysses S. Grant as a general, or even pushing Abraham Lincoln towards emancipation. However, some historians are vehement in their criticism of Frémont, including some contemporary accounts.

As primary sources, Civil War journals and reminiscences can be invaluable in bringing to life the story of the average soldier, and the stories of the soldiers who served under Frémont are telling regarding his capabilities as a leader. A member of the First

---

<sup>13</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 472.

Iowa Infantry in Missouri, Eugene Fitch Ware's account of Frémont is one of incompetent leadership and soldierly disdain. He harshly criticizes Frémont as a commander, although he does not offer much of an explanation for these feelings and almost mentions them in passing. His tone is sharp, however, as he remarks "If there ever was an empty, spread-eagle, show-off, horn-tooting general, it was Frémont... we all despised him forever and forever more. He had no abilities of any kind."<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the publication date for Ware's account was decades after the Civil War ended, and an account written during the war may or may not be more reliable in telling the full story of Frémont's command.

Published one hundred years after its writing, the Civil War journal of Colonel Albert Tracy serves as an intriguing primary source, as it is a direct account of a soldier's service under Frémont's command in both Missouri and the Shenandoah Valley. Tracy's journal contains an account of Frémont as a doggedly dedicated general who commanded the loyalty of his troops in both theaters of the war. These troops also supposedly expressed outrage at his removal from command in Missouri and his resignation from his second command, which paints a much different picture than Ware's account of soldier acrimony. However, the truth may be somewhere in between the two extremes, as Tracy served as an aide-de-camp to Frémont, and therefore may have felt a greater sense of loyalty to him than other soldiers.<sup>15</sup> Although neither account fundamentally shifted the way historians interpreted Frémont as a person, they both go to show that his legacy

---

<sup>14</sup> Eugene Fitch Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri: Being a History of the First Iowa Infantry and of the Causes which Led up to Its organization, and How it Earned the Thanks of Congress, which it Got. Together with a Birdseye View of the Conditions in Iowa Preceding the Great Civil War of 1861* (Topeka, KS: Crane & Company, 1907), 248.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Tracy, "Fremont's Pursuit of Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley: The Journal of Colonel Albert Tracy, March- July 1862," ed. Francis F. Wayland, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 70, no. 2 (April 1962): 166.

continues to be heavily debated based on both primary source evidence and the ways historians have interpreted it. While these Civil War diaries and remembrances, like Lincoln and Frémont biographies, focus largely on narrative, some historians have ventured out of this narrative realm and into new and exciting fields of study.

As historians have looked to historical houses outside of empiricism and narrative, these new disciplines have worked their way into the studies of Lincoln and Frémont, particularly concerning psychohistory. While not all biographers have embraced the idea of psychohistory, a few have, with interesting new results. One such historian is Andrew Rolle, whose 1992 work *John Charles Frémont: Character as Destiny* is an excellent bibliographic psychoanalysis. Frémont is the ideal subject for psychohistory as presented by Rolle in his volume, as many of his decisions were questionable at best, and could trace back to a psyche stunted by an odd childhood marked by the loss of a parent and a pervading sense of narcissism. Rolle argues effectively that Frémont's psychological issues led him to lead a defensive lifestyle which resulted in sometimes spectacular failures that he remained unable to explain.<sup>16</sup> However, psychohistory is not the only intriguing development to occur in terms of the historiography of Lincoln and Frémont.

Gender studies is a fascinating field to apply to the story of Lincoln and Frémont. While one could argue for a take on the Lincoln-Frémont relationship that focuses on masculinity, the area of gender studies that is most applicable to their relationship at this time involves Frémont's wife, Jessie Benton Frémont. While many historians continue to study Jessie's role in bringing about Lincoln's ire towards her husband, her

---

<sup>16</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 279.

correspondence has had a relatively brief shelf life. However, Pamela Herr and Mary Lee Spence have tried to bring Jessie Frémont to life through their projects and collaborations, and have largely been successful. By publishing a selection of Jessie's letters to her friend Elizabeth Blair Lee, Herr and Spence have introduced gender studies into the saga of Lincoln and Frémont, opening the door for potential future studies of the role of masculinity and gender divisions to make their way into the story.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps these future studies will provide a more balanced look at Lincoln and Frémont's relationship without devolving into the hero versus villain trope. Yet this remains an easy tendency to fall into when historians examine the emancipation saga that unfolded between them.

Two years prior to Lincoln's emancipation proclamation, Frémont unilaterally emancipated Missouri's slaves, leading to a huge issue for Abraham Lincoln to grapple with- along with many future historians. Scholars have struggled to define the exact motivations for the decision-making by both Lincoln and Frémont during the emancipation debate, and will likely continue to do so. All the while, these historians will indirectly gauge Frémont's capacity for leadership against Lincoln's, meaning Frémont will likely never be able to measure up. However, a few unique perspectives on the Lincoln-Frémont relationship have arisen over the past few years that challenge previous beliefs about the importance of Frémont's emancipation edict and Lincoln's response to it.

In 2013 Richard S. Newman contributed significantly to the Lincoln-Frémont story. By examining emancipation edicts in the Civil War, Newman furthered the relatively new argument about the significance of Frémont's emancipation decree as a

---

<sup>17</sup> Herr and Spence, "I Really Had Something like the Blues," 16-31.

stepping stone towards the eventual Emancipation Proclamation. Newman looks at the emancipation edicts of many Civil War generals but notes a special significance to Frémont's as the first one.<sup>18</sup> Newman cited another relatively recent work on the Lincoln-Frémont emancipation saga, Allen C. Guelzo's *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*. Guelzo explores the methods by which Lincoln arrived at the conclusion that the nation was ready for emancipation by September of 1862 when clearly, he believed that it was not ready in 1861 when Frémont issued his proclamation. Guelzo ultimately concludes that time was the key ingredient in changing Lincoln's mind, but Guelzo's scholarship also outlines many of the ways in which Frémont influenced Lincoln.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen, scholarship surrounding Lincoln and Frémont is immense, especially pertaining to Lincoln, whom historians continue to see as the hero in his battle against the inept or even corrupt Frémont. However, historians should ask themselves why they portray Lincoln in such a positive light and Frémont in such a negative one before falling into the same old tropes. In asking this question, we must be aware of general trends among biographers and historians who have attempted to examine the Lincoln-Frémont relationship. The earliest biographers focused on narrative and empirical techniques for research, focusing primarily on manuscripts from the Abraham Lincoln, John C. Frémont, and Blair family papers to tell the story. Newer biographers have focused less on politics and rehashing the overarching narrative and more on diverse outlooks and a greater role for Frémont as an independent decision-maker outside of the

---

<sup>18</sup> Richard S. Newman "The Age of Emancipating Proclamations: Early Civil War Abolitionism and Its Discontents," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 137, no. 1 (January 2013): 33-55.

<sup>19</sup> Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, Introduction, Kindle.

realm of merely acting in response to Lincoln or the Radicals. But what significance have all these studies had?

Studying change over time can allow for new perspectives to enter the field. Without a critical eye toward previous scholarship, psychohistory and gender could not have permeated the field of Lincoln-Frémont studies. Empiricism and narrative have both remained relatively consistent, however, other disciplines have not yet worked their way into the field, showing the need for further study and new historians with new perspectives. Unsurprisingly, narrative is the predominant method chosen by historians to reconstruct the story surrounding Lincoln and Frémont, as it is the simplest approach and lends itself well to analysis. However, the same narrative can only go so far, and future generations of historians may be interested in generating new approaches to a story told multiple times over. There is certainly still more scholarship available regarding Lincoln and Frémont, and it will be up to these future historians to do what previous ones have done and tease out new and exciting arguments to keep the field renewed.

The field of Lincoln studies is an interesting and nearly immeasurable one, and there are many Frémont studies, but the works of historians who have studied both men in conjunction with each other are a bit more complicated. The historiography surrounding Lincoln is vast enough for a full-length study that defies a succinct summary. Even the historiography surrounding Frémont is no longer easy to explain. But although some historians have evaluated the relationship between Lincoln and Frémont as a whole, there is certainly still more work to do in this area if one truly wants to understand the inner machinations of their minds. So much of their relationship unfolded in correspondence, and these writings have been open to countless interpretations. And as

more diverse perspectives enter the field and historians explore new areas of study, the potential to unlock new explanations of each man's behavior towards the other is unbounded. Why is all of this particularly important for our understanding? The answer is largely because historians need to reevaluate the way they examine the relationship between Lincoln and Frémont.

While there seems to be a lack of consensus on Frémont's historical reputation, Lincoln's reputation has remained solid. A large part of the reason for this is that Lincoln is known as the Great Emancipator, and his legacy and the legacy of emancipation will forever be entwined. However, upon diving deeper into the history of emancipation, it becomes clear that Frémont helped pave the way for Lincoln's eventual decision to emancipate the slaves, fulfilling his moniker "Pathfinder" in a way he never anticipated. Frémont trod the path of emancipation a year before Lincoln did, yet his historical legacy does not reflect this fact. A fuller understanding of the process by which emancipation unfolded is warranted due to the important legacy of emancipation, and restoring John C. Frémont to a place of importance in that narrative can only occur if historians recognize the contributions that Frémont made. Although emancipation would become Lincoln's legacy, those who inspired this idea deserve credit where credit is due. Despite his shortcomings, Frémont's legacy should also intertwine with the legacy of emancipation as Lincoln's does. He may not have been the Great Emancipator, but it seems as though his actions allowed Lincoln to assume that mantle.

## CHAPTER III

### FRÉMONT IN THE WEST

John C. Frémont may have been able to secure his place in history as a notable and controversial explorer even without the Civil War, but his reputation would cement itself once the war began and he became a celebrity general. Shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter, Frémont received word in Europe of the beginning of hostilities. He was already preparing for such a conflict, using his own money to purchase weapons on behalf of the United States.<sup>1</sup> He had met with President-elect Lincoln on his way to Europe in February and would meet with him again upon his arrival back to the United States.<sup>2</sup> But this time, Lincoln would be in office at the head of a crisis, and Frémont would take command of the vast Department of the West. Upon their meeting, Lincoln declared to Frémont that he had given him “carte blanche” to do whatever was necessary to achieve success in his new position.<sup>3</sup> The Northern public roared their approval of Frémont’s appointment, hoping he could make sense of the dire situation that was unfolding in Missouri.<sup>4</sup> What Frémont and Lincoln failed to realize, however, was just how dire that situation truly was.

---

<sup>1</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 190.

<sup>2</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 471, 475.

<sup>3</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 477.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, “Frémont and the Politicians,” 178.

Due largely to poor decision-making by those in power, the Department of the West, including Missouri, was in shambles at the start of the war. This vast Department, which spanned from Missouri to the Rocky Mountains with its headquarters at St. Louis, was reformulated into the Western Department when Frémont assumed command.<sup>5</sup> However, prior to this, it had been under the control of Generals William S. Harney and Nathaniel Lyon.<sup>6</sup> While Harney and Lyon attempted to control the military situation on behalf of the Federal government, politics in Missouri were spiraling out of control. The newly-elected Governor, Claiborne Fox Jackson, had fled St. Louis for his secessionist plotting, and despite the appearance that St. Louis was under Federal control, guerilla warfare was breaking out across the state.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in early 1861, as the nation turned its eyes to Fort Sumter, many anticipated that hostilities would first break out in St. Louis.<sup>8</sup> The situation was utterly chaotic, and the Lincoln administration expected Frémont, with no real military training, to step in. This appointment, unquestionably politically motivated as a favor to the Blair family who had taken on Frémont as their protégé, would prove fateful for the course of the war. It would also prove fateful for Frémont's legacy as it allowed him to write his name into the history books, although not necessarily in the way he would have wanted

Since 1861, Frémont's detractors have analyzed his actions in Missouri with scathing criticism. One point of contention for both historians and some of Frémont's contemporaries was his delay in arriving at his post. Frémont received his appointment to

---

<sup>5</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 456.

<sup>6</sup> William E. Gienapp, "Abraham Lincoln and the Border States," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 13 (November 1992): 28.

<sup>7</sup> Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012), 31.

<sup>8</sup> Michael D. Robinson, *A Union Indivisible: Secession and the Politics of Slavery in the Border South* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 152.

the Western Department on July 3, 1861.<sup>9</sup> However, he did not arrive in St. Louis until July 25, three weeks later.<sup>10</sup> What had preoccupied him so much while a war was raging? Some critics charged that he was busying himself with personal business, perhaps wrapping up some of the business dealings that he was carrying out in Europe when he heard news of the war.<sup>11</sup> In reality, Frémont had been in New York doing the same thing he had been doing in Europe- attempting to obtain supplies for what he knew would be a desperate, underprepared military force in the West.<sup>12</sup> While this is merely one example of where Frémont’s enemies would find fault in him, in this instance he was truly not guilty and was instead trying to actively solve a problem- a problem that the Lincoln administration had been choosing to ignore.

While alarmed by the threat of secession and keenly aware of Missouri’s status as a border state, Lincoln’s focus at the start of the Civil War was on the Eastern theater. The major reason for this was that the fighting there was essentially taking place in his backyard, with Washington D.C. as a huge target for the Confederates.<sup>13</sup> Missouri, on the other hand, far removed from the “real” conflict as Lincoln saw it, could afford less attention.<sup>14</sup> Better to focus on the legitimate threat of the Confederate Army in the East than to worry about guerillas in Missouri. That was a problem that a few capable individuals could solve on behalf of the administration. And the Blairs had been building up Frémont to be that capable individual, or so they thought. Therefore, upon Frémont’s appointment, Lincoln must have thought that giving him “carte blanche” would allow

---

<sup>9</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, chap. 23, Kindle.

<sup>10</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 459.

<sup>11</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 476.

<sup>12</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 457.

<sup>13</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 298.

<sup>14</sup> Gienapp, “Abraham Lincoln,” 42.

Frémont to solve this problem for him with minimal drama. But Missouri was setting up for a dramatic escalation of hostilities and politics that would test the capabilities of both Lincoln and Frémont.

Over the course of the Civil War, Missouri was a hotbed of conflict. By the war's end, it would rank third behind Virginia and Tennessee in terms of battles fought.<sup>15</sup> While the first major battle, the Battle of Wilson's Creek, would not take place until after Frémont was in command, conflict was raging as soon as secession began. Divisions between Harney, with possible pro-Confederate sentiments, and Lyon, who was emphatically pro-Union, were boiling to a head, as was confusion between Federal and state forces taking on both the Confederate Army heading into Missouri and the pro-secessionist militia.<sup>16</sup> Captain Albert Tracy recounts the disorganization that plagued Missouri's regiments and the Department of the West in general under the command of Harney and Lyon.<sup>17</sup> Surely Frémont, with his leadership experience from his western explorations, could bring some type of organization to such a chaotic situation.

Upon Frémont's arrival, he found Missouri in disarray, with Confederates threatening to invade on multiple fronts, and the security of St. Louis entirely uncertain. To make matters worse, on August 10, 1861, at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Lyon died in the fighting and the Union lost the battle.<sup>18</sup> Many contemporaries blamed Frémont for failing to reinforce Lyon, and this has been a critique vocalized by many subsequent historians as well.<sup>19</sup> However, Frémont had chosen instead to send reinforcements to

---

<sup>15</sup> Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> For excellent background on the conflict in Missouri, see Gerteis' *The Civil War in Missouri*, chapter 1.

<sup>17</sup> Albert Tracy, "Missouri in Crisis: The Journal of Captain Albert Tracy, 1861," ed. Ray W. Irwin, *Missouri Historical Review* 51 no. 1 (October 1956): 16-18.

<sup>18</sup> Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri*, 72-73.

<sup>19</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 488-89.

Cairo, Illinois, which ended up being more strategically important than the location of Wilson's Creek in southwest Missouri.<sup>20</sup> Frémont was clearly feeling the early stressors and criticisms that came with his new position, and an analysis of his subsequent decision-making must take this into account.

Frémont continued to make enemies in Missouri as his command began. Firstly, he did not cooperate as he probably should have with the provisional government that was set up in Missouri following Claiborne Fox Jackson's flight from St. Louis. Nor did he cooperate with the provisional Governor, Hamilton Gamble, who happened to be the brother-in-law of Edward Bates, Lincoln's Attorney General.<sup>21</sup> With Gamble witnessing Frémont's failures firsthand and reporting back to Bates, Lincoln stayed informed of the situation in Missouri and knew Frémont was beginning to make enemies. At one point, Frémont even went directly to Lincoln with complaints of his enemies, writing about Frank Blair Jr. (who had maneuvered to get him his position in the first place) and Lyon as "evidently military asses!"<sup>22</sup> It seems that Frémont was getting in over his head, and the situation was quickly deteriorating in the hands of somebody who was proving incapable of dealing with it.

Eventually, Frémont would decide that the state that Missouri was in required an organized intervention. Therefore, he declared martial law throughout the state on August 30, 1861.<sup>23</sup> Frémont cited the "disorganized condition, the helplessness of the civil authority, the total insecurity of life, and the devastation of property by bands of murderers and marauders, who infest nearly every county" as his rationale for declaring

---

<sup>20</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 459.

<sup>21</sup> Robinson, *A Union Indivisible*, 189; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 389.

<sup>22</sup> John C. Frémont to Abraham Lincoln, July 29, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>23</sup> David Work, *Lincoln's Political Generals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 188.

the proclamation.<sup>24</sup> Missouri was indeed in crisis. The Civil War was playing out there as viciously as in other theaters of the war, and thousands were suffering and dying.

Something had to give, and it would have been a tough situation for even somebody who was more experienced and more well-prepared than Frémont. It seems unfair to say that martial law was unnecessary given the realities of the Missouri situation, and therefore, had he stopped there, Frémont may have actually been making the right decision. But, he did not stop there, instead taking an additional step- emancipating Missouri's slaves.

Since that fateful August day in 1861, critics have analyzed Frémont's proclamation and tried to discern why exactly he issued it in the first place. Many have contended that Frémont was simply following his abolitionist beliefs and used the position he had been elevated to in an effort to bring those beliefs to fruition. Such historians include Vernon L. Volpe, who has convincingly argued that both John and Jessie Frémont were staunchly antislavery and espoused abolitionist beliefs.<sup>25</sup> Frémont had unquestionably gained a reputation as an abolitionist by representing the Republican Party in 1856, despite remaining quiet on the slavery issue in an attempt to obtain more votes.<sup>26</sup> He may or may not have truly harbored abolitionist viewpoints leading up to 1861, but by August of that year, Frémont at the very least seemed like an abolitionist by choosing to emancipate the slaves in Missouri.

As if Frémont's decision was not controversial enough, additionally he chose to make the decision to emancipate essentially unilaterally, consulting only two people.

---

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Phillips, "Lincoln's Grasp of War: Hard War and the Politics of Neutrality and Slavery in the Western Border States, 1861-1862," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 2 (June 2013): 191-92.

<sup>25</sup> Volpe, "The Frémonts," 343.

<sup>26</sup> Egerton, "The Slaves' Election," 61.

Unsurprisingly, one of those people was Jessie Frémont, his steadfast wife who would back his decision all the way to Washington D.C.<sup>27</sup> The other person consulted was his aide, Edward M. Davis, an abolitionist who warned him against issuing the proclamation due to fear of backlash.<sup>28</sup> Had Frémont taken his plan to his commander-in-chief before publicizing it, the entire saga might have panned out differently. As it happened though, President Lincoln found out about Frémont's proclamation at the same time the public did, by reading about it in a newspaper.<sup>29</sup> Unquestionably, Lincoln was blindsided by the decision- a point that historians must take into account when interpreting his ultimate decision to rescind the order. There remains, however, a valid question asked by too few historians- should Lincoln really have retracted the order?

Upon consideration of Lincoln's decision to remand Frémont's edict, most historians agree that Lincoln's cancellation of it was necessary to prevent the border states from going to the Confederacy. Frémont's edict gravely threatened the proslavery Unionist sentiment that existed within the border states. As historian Michael D. Robinson has pointed out, the border states stayed in the Union in the hopes that the Union would best protect their slaveholding interest. Frémont's proclamation was directly counterintuitive to this logic.<sup>30</sup> The border states presented a difficult situation for the Lincoln administration, as they conducted military emancipation throughout the Confederacy essentially from the start of the war, but pursued gradual abolition policies in the border states.<sup>31</sup> And, when the First Confiscation Act was passed in early August

---

<sup>27</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 500.

<sup>28</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 463; Nevins, *Frémont*, 500, 503.

<sup>29</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 390.

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, *A Union Indivisible*, 191.

<sup>31</sup> Oakes, *Freedom National*, preface, Kindle.

1861, few people knew whether it would apply to those border states.<sup>32</sup> The Lincoln administration was faced with a choice- introduce gradual abolition as a peacetime plan, or lean into the fact that internal, smaller civil wars were disrupting the border states and enforce military emancipation.<sup>33</sup> In Missouri, Frémont made that decision before Lincoln was ready to.

However, there is merit to the argument that martial law was necessary in Missouri. As multiple historians have pointed out, the border state situation was tenuous, and Missouri could easily have joined the Confederates, with loyalties divided between the North and South.<sup>34</sup> Lincoln himself acknowledged this by allowing Frémont to have a wide leash in determining whether to execute prisoners as a provision of his order.<sup>35</sup> And, Missouri had a “substantial level of disloyalty” to the Union, leading to more civilian arrests by the Army than in any other state.<sup>36</sup> Lincoln’s good friend, Orville Hickman Browning, wrote to Lincoln that “treason and secession are rampant” in Missouri.<sup>37</sup> Frémont knew Missouri’s precarious position too and felt he needed to do everything in his power to prevent Southern victory. So Frémont’s declaration, which critics have panned over the years, had legitimate grounds. The addition of the emancipation piece and the way he chose to go about it, however, was exceptionally problematic and presented Lincoln with a unique challenge- a challenge that would set the stage for perhaps his most prolific act as President, the Emancipation Proclamation.

---

<sup>32</sup> Oakes, *Freedom National*, chap. 4, Kindle.

<sup>33</sup> Oakes, *Freedom National*, chap. 5, Kindle.

<sup>34</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 390; Nevins, *Frémont*, 505; W.M. Brewer, “Lincoln and The Border States,” *The Journal of Negro History* 34, no. 1 (January 1949): 55.

<sup>35</sup> Phillips, “Lincoln’s Grasp of War,” 192.

<sup>36</sup> Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 44.

<sup>37</sup> Orville H. Browning to Abraham Lincoln, April 18, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

It seems too big of a stretch to say that Frémont willingly sacrificed his own historical reputation to promote the abolitionist cause and encourage the Lincoln administration to hurry up on emancipation. And yet, Frémont did it anyway, supposedly with the knowledge that this could hinder his popularity, which was already at risk due to Wilson's Creek and the death of Lyon. Why would he risk so much, especially when the potential rewards only really impacted others and not himself? Perhaps he knew it was the right thing to do. Perhaps he believed Lincoln would support him. Or, perhaps he hoped to become an example to the Lincoln administration of what emancipation could look like if they could commit to it. If so, this hope became reality, as Frémont helped move the needle towards emancipation. It was not immediate, as Lincoln still took about a year to issue his preliminary proclamation. But as all the correspondence that Lincoln sent and received during and after the Frémont imbroglio shows, the issue of emancipation as a war measure clearly went to the forefront of Lincoln's mind and stayed there.

Lincoln and Frémont both knew that something drastic needed to happen in the Department of the West, more specifically Missouri, but clearly had different viewpoints as to what that drastic measure needed to be. By giving Frémont "carte blanche" over the situation, Lincoln unwittingly opened the door to one of the most impactful episodes of the Civil War- the process by which emancipation would unfold. While the situation called for a heavy-handed response, like martial law, which Lincoln probably would have condoned had he stopped there, Frémont took an additional step towards emancipation. In doing so, he would end up shaping the future not only of the Civil War but also of the nation by opening the door for a widespread emancipation proclamation.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Despite the objective of declaring martial law throughout Missouri, Frémont's edict of August 1861 became famous for its emancipation piece, which received a widespread public response. Many people, particularly in the North, were overjoyed by the news of emancipation, perhaps feeling as though Frémont had found a way to deliver on his 1856 campaign promises.<sup>1</sup> Many expressed their desire to see Frémont's proclamation upheld by the Lincoln administration, and maybe even adopted on a larger scale. Some wrote directly to Lincoln, advocating for such a course of action.<sup>2</sup> One notable individual who encouraged Lincoln to support Frémont was his good friend Orville Hickman Browning, who wrote to him on September 11, 1861, the same day that Lincoln sent the order to Frémont to modify his proclamation.<sup>3</sup> But for all those who saw Frémont's decision as a positive good, many saw it as having the potential to change the entire tide of the war.

The public knew about the precarious situation in the border states, and many feared that alienating these states would cause them to join the Confederacy, which could

---

<sup>1</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 504.

<sup>2</sup> Michael J. Gerhardt, *Lincoln's Mentors: The Education of a Leader* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021), 325.

<sup>3</sup> Orville H. Browning to Abraham Lincoln, September 11, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

have spelled disaster for the Union cause. Lincoln himself worried about this, reportedly saying ““I hope to have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky.””<sup>4</sup> Therefore, many felt as though Frémont’s declaration of martial law, and particularly the emancipation piece, could be the catalyst for the border states to make such a decision to leave the Union.<sup>5</sup> Despite all the advice Lincoln was given to uphold the proclamation, he also received many letters warning him of the dangers of this act.<sup>6</sup> It seems in the end that Lincoln was inclined to follow this line of thinking, and perhaps for good reason.

The question becomes, what were the border states really thinking? Would they have gone over to the Confederacy because of Frémont’s singular action? Some historians, such as James Oakes, have questioned this, but the answer among most seems to be that it was a very real possibility.<sup>7</sup> It is one thing to study public reactions in the North and South, leading people to assume how the border states would react based on their understanding of what those people believed about emancipation. Reading into what those in the border states did, however, can give us a clearer picture of how they really felt. For example, historian William E. Gienapp has claimed that “the decisive event that drove Kentucky out of its neutrality was not Frémont’s rash act but the Confederate army’s invasion of the state in September 1861.”<sup>8</sup> But, Michael D. Robinson argues that only with Lincoln’s rebuke of Frémont’s proclamation did the Kentuckians decide to evict the Confederates from their state.<sup>9</sup> However, the Lincoln administration may or may

---

<sup>4</sup> White, Jr., *A. Lincoln*, 449.

<sup>5</sup> Work, *Lincoln’s Political Generals*, 189.

<sup>6</sup> One frequently quoted letter came from Joshua Speed, Lincoln’s good friend in Kentucky, see Joshua F. Speed to Abraham Lincoln, September 3, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Oakes, *Freedom National*, chap. 5, Kindle; Brewer, “Lincoln and the Border States,” 66; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 390.

<sup>8</sup> Gienapp, “Abraham Lincoln,” 24.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, *A Union Indivisible*, 193.

not have understood this complex situation on the ground as they debated the best course of action regarding the border states.

One can imagine that with the diversity of viewpoints in Lincoln's cabinet, there would be various opinions as to what to do about Frémont and the border states. Many cabinet members urged caution, including Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, who had previously advocated for Frémont and was now, alongside his family, beginning to turn against him.<sup>10</sup> Another voice advocating for restraint was Edward Bates, the Missourian who was keen on staying up-to-date on the turmoil his state was going through.<sup>11</sup> And while it is hard to imagine staunch abolitionists like William Seward and Salmon Chase asking Lincoln to rescind an emancipation proclamation, this does not mean that they did not consider the border state situation. There was an air of significance hanging around Lincoln's decision in regard to Frémont, with many different voices attempting to pull him in different directions. But how did Lincoln himself feel about the situation?

Historians have generally focused on Lincoln's decision to rescind Frémont's proclamation from a standpoint of military strategy, not always considering Lincoln's true feelings on the matter. Personally, Lincoln was strongly antislavery, although he did not yet feel entirely comfortable with the idea of government-mandated emancipation, especially in the border states which still fell under the authority of the federal government.<sup>12</sup> So it seems unlikely that Lincoln supported Frémont's decision deep

---

<sup>10</sup> William E. Smith, "The Blairs and Fremont," *Missouri Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (January 1929): 245.

<sup>11</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 394.

<sup>12</sup> Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 297-98.

down, although it is possible that he may have felt that Frémont's heart was in the right place.

However, one could make the argument that Lincoln might have supported the idea of emancipation had it been discussed with him in detail and he had the opportunity to shape the edict, as he would ultimately do with his own proclamation. Surely, as his response to Orville Browning on September 22, 1861, indicates, he took offense to the idea of his subordinate dictating what the government should do. Lincoln wrote, "Gen. Fremont's proclamation as to confiscation of property, and the liberation of slaves, is purely political, and not within the range of military law, or necessity."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps it was a combination of pride and strategy that compelled him to order Frémont to change the order, or perhaps it was simply fear for the border states. But if Lincoln was worried about the government dictating emancipation to its citizens, he would find a way to shake that fear by September of 1862, at which point he would issue his own Emancipation Proclamation. Therefore, the argument stands that Frémont's proclamation could very well have opened Lincoln's eyes to the possibility of proclaiming emancipation, even if he was not yet ready for it.

There is no question that Frémont's choices weighed heavily on Lincoln's mind at the end of August and into September of 1861. He had the monumental task of trying to keep the country afloat while fighting a civil war and now had an insubordinate general attempting to make waves that he had to deal with as well. But could the challenges presented by Frémont have sparked an idea within Lincoln that would shape American history? Historians have rejected the notion of Lincoln as a staunch abolitionist, ready to

---

<sup>13</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, September 22, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

emancipate as quickly as possible.<sup>14</sup> Despite the hagiography surrounding him, this simply is not true. Lincoln did want to end slavery, but could not commit himself to abolishing it unilaterally, as Frémont would attempt to do. So, when someone else attempted to take this step that he considered extreme, he refused them. Not only did he rescind Frémont's order, but he also took similar steps when General David Hunter also attempted military emancipation.<sup>15</sup> His refusal to submit to emancipation as a military necessity (up until September of 1862) shows his reticence towards embracing the idea of emancipation at the start of the war.

By the time the war had been going on for about a year and a half, however, something changed. Lincoln suddenly embraced what he had regarded as unacceptable, and decided it was time for military emancipation. Many historians have argued that with more victories for the Union army, particularly at the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln felt that the time was right.<sup>16</sup> This argument has a solid grounding in historical fact, as Lincoln himself claimed that this was the reason for his decision.<sup>17</sup> But, on a deeper, perhaps even subconscious level, there could be more to the story.

Having seen Frémont and Hunter both attempt to emancipate the slaves under their respective commands could very well have given Lincoln pause when rescinding their orders. Surely he had to stop and think about why this was becoming such a popular course of action. Not only that, but surely he was aware of the popular support for each individual's proclamation. Granted, there were those that spurned each effort, but Lincoln

---

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent work on the distinction between Abraham Lincoln and the abolitionists he worked with and sometimes against, see Fred Kaplan, *Lincoln and the Abolitionists: John Quincy Adams, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), xi.

<sup>15</sup> Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 206-7.

<sup>16</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 374; Reynolds, *Abe*, 592; Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 318; White, Jr., *A. Lincoln*, 516.

<sup>17</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 481.

would have known that this would happen with any attempt at emancipation, including his own. Without earlier attempts at emancipation, notably by Frémont who was the first, it would have been almost impossible for Lincoln to gauge popular opinion regarding military emancipation, particularly from the border states, without revealing his plans. By September 1862, he was ready to issue his preliminary emancipation proclamation. One year prior, he was unwilling to allow emancipation to stand. While the progress of the war certainly changed things, challenges from Frémont and Hunter could also have convinced Lincoln to allow emancipation to move forward.

As it stood in late 1861, however, Lincoln was not ready to commit fully to emancipation. He recognized that the border states were going to be extremely important to the war effort, and was simply unwilling to alienate them by shifting the purpose of the war from union to emancipation. The border states valued caution and conservative inclinations over things they saw as radical, such as Republicanism.<sup>18</sup> Because of these impulses, Lincoln was very cautious with his policies right up until he issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation, a year after rescinding Frémont's. However, Lincoln was still developing his own opinions towards race at the same time, as shown in his determination to attempt colonization of former slaves in Africa, a scheme that he did not fully abandon until 1864.<sup>19</sup> By all accounts, Lincoln simply was not ready, both personally and from a war-oriented standpoint, to abide by large-scale emancipation in September of 1861.

Lincoln displayed his reticence towards emancipation in 1861 by instructing Frémont to revoke his proclamation. He wrote to Frémont on September 2, asking him to

---

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, *A Union Indivisible*, 80, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 259-60.

modify the proclamation, to which Frémont responded that he would not unless directly instructed to do so.<sup>20</sup> Lincoln attempted to keep a positive tone in his instruction to Frémont but did include a direct order, and a written response that Frémont could give to the press from the President.<sup>21</sup> Why Frémont felt the need to escalate the situation by demanding a direct order to revoke the proclamation has baffled historians, just as it puzzled Lincoln. Nonetheless, Frémont obviously felt as though he was being singled out by the President, and that letters would not do to get his point across. He needed to act- or at least have someone take action on his behalf. Enter Jessie Benton Frémont.

Unafraid to stand up for her husband, Jessie decided to take it upon herself to go to Washington D.C. and advocate for John's decision-making capabilities, which Lincoln was beginning to question. Both John and Jessie had surely heard the rumors that were circulating that Lincoln was considering John's dismissal, and were aware of the criticisms being laid against him.<sup>22</sup> Unwilling to stand idly by, as she had essentially been forced to do during the court martial debacle, Jessie made a mad dash to the capital. Desperate to speak with the President, upon her arrival she sent her card to the White House asking when she could obtain a meeting.<sup>23</sup> Before she had even had a chance to change her clothes and settle in, the response came: "'A. Lincoln, Now.'"<sup>24</sup> Jessie quickly arrived at the White House and met with the President.

Various versions of what happened next have circulated throughout the years. According to Jessie herself, she met with Lincoln who was extremely dismissive towards

---

<sup>20</sup> Abraham Lincoln to John C. Frémont, September 2, 1861, and John C. Frémont to Abraham Lincoln, September 8, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Lincoln to John C. Frémont, September 11, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 202.

<sup>23</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 516.

<sup>24</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 392.

the situation, and towards her directly. Lincoln reportedly called her “quite a female politician.”<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly, Lincoln’s recollection was somewhat different, recounting later on to his secretaries Nicolay and Hay that Jessie “sought an audience with me at midnight, and taxed me so violently with many things that I had to exercise all the awkward tact I have to avoid quarreling with her. . . . She more than once intimated that if General Frémont should decide to try conclusions with me, he could set up for himself.”<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting that Nicolay and Hay’s account does not contain any mention of Lincoln’s directive for Jessie to come to the White House immediately, nor the “female politician” quote. Nicolay and Hay also preface their rendition of the Jessie-Lincoln showdown with the note that Lincoln told them this story two years after it had occurred, and Lincoln may have omitted some of the snide remarks he made to Jessie Frémont, who herself could have been embellishing in her account.

Whatever was said behind closed doors, however, did not stay behind closed doors for long, as Francis Preston Blair quickly got involved. The elder Blair was aware that his son, Frank, was vying for power in Missouri, and that Frémont was not willing to concede much power to him, with one historian writing, “St. Louis was not large enough to hold the two men.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Frémont had fallen out of Blair's good graces. So when Blair heard that Jessie had gone directly to the President, he was beside himself and went to Jessie at her hotel to confront her.<sup>28</sup> The Blairs had already turned against Frémont due to his hostile treatment of Frank, whom he would ultimately have jailed

---

<sup>25</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 319.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, chap. 23, Kindle.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, “The Blairs and Fremont,” 234.

<sup>28</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 519.

twice.<sup>29</sup> But Jessie's confrontation with Lincoln was perhaps the nail in the coffin, solidifying John's fate regarding his command of the Western Department.

People questioned Lincoln's appointment of Frémont from the beginning, as many felt he should have had a cabinet post, while others felt he was unqualified to be a general, and still others felt that he deserved no title at all. But by the time Frémont had been in his position for a few months and had made a name for himself with his martial law/emancipation order, many began agitating for his removal, not least the Blair family who had helped put Frémont in command in the first place.<sup>30</sup> Lincoln ultimately would be inclined to listen to this group, but there were many on the other side of the argument who felt that Frémont should remain in his place.

Just as they had written to Lincoln requesting Frémont's emancipation order stay in place, people began campaigning for Frémont to retain his position as head of the Western Department once rumors began to float around that he might be removed. In fact, one group of soldiers that were serving under him petitioned Lincoln directly to attempt to keep him in command, stating "That the whole army of the West share in this confidence and desire to serve under him."<sup>31</sup> Despite their pleas, perhaps due to Frémont's insubordination, Lincoln inched closer and closer to removing Frémont as they approached the end of 1861.

By the time Lincoln decided to remove Frémont, there were many strikes against him, not simply the emancipation edict that did not work in his favor. Granted, his

---

<sup>29</sup> Grace N. Taylor, "The Blair Family in the Civil War (Concluded)," *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 39, no. 127 (April 1941): 145

<sup>30</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 391.

<sup>31</sup> Officers of the Western Department to Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1861, #2317, Box 1, Frémont Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

emancipation order was highly controversial, hotly contested, and rescinded in dramatic fashion, but that itself may not have been enough to warrant his removal. In addition to all of this, he was fighting very few battles, and having little success with the ones that were fought under him, like Wilson's Creek.<sup>32</sup> Another failed battle was at Lexington, where the Confederates forced a Union surrender, due in large part to Frémont's failure to reinforce Colonel James A. Mulligan and his troops, much like Lyon at Wilson's Creek.<sup>33</sup> But, one must also consider generals like McClellan, whom Lincoln kept around for a long time without having much military success. It seems unlikely that even these failures would have been enough to remove Frémont. Surely something else was working against him as well.

As much as the Frémonts would claim that the force working against them was the Blair family, in reality, there were other charges that John was facing. The Blairs were indeed turning against the Frémonts and encouraging John's removal, but John had also gotten himself into hot water over claims of exorbitant spending and corruption within his office.<sup>34</sup> But it was difficult for Frémont to refute the charges of corruption when he isolated himself from the public, which was another matter that people found fault with.<sup>35</sup> Frémont tended to keep to himself as a person, and this was reflected in his organization of the Western Department. His office was a building rented from a relative of Jessie's (yet another charge against him) and he essentially refused to see anybody that approached him outside of his inner circle, although this may have been due to the

---

<sup>32</sup> Work, *Lincoln's Political Generals*, 39-40.

<sup>33</sup> Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri*, 108.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Thomas Smith, "Corruption European Style: The 1861 Frémont Scandal and Popular Fears in the Civil War North," *American Nineteenth Century History* 10, no.1 (March 2009): 53.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, "Corruption European Style," 59.

logistics of all the chaos he had to manage.<sup>36</sup> The public felt cut off from the man who was supposed to be their champion and defender, and a deep sense of betrayal took hold.

Lincoln knew about this, as evidenced by his writings to General David Hunter in September 1861. Lincoln wrote that Frémont's "cardinal mistake is that he isolates himself & allows nobody to see him and by which he does not know what is going on in the very matter he is dealing with."<sup>37</sup> In addition, Frémont employed a mostly German personal bodyguard, which, in a largely xenophobic culture, did not bode well.<sup>38</sup> Finally, Frémont simply did not possess a personality that catered well to public service. He was more at home exploring the West than associating with politicians like the Blairs or ordinary Missourians who requested his help. This, after all, was Jessie's sphere, not his.<sup>39</sup> All of this combined into the perfect storm of dissatisfaction with Frémont that pushed the public, the cabinet, and Lincoln himself into his removal.

Many historians have taken it upon themselves to investigate the causes behind Frémont's firing. Some claim that it had everything to do with emancipation, and little to do with the other mitigating circumstances listed above.<sup>40</sup> This seems to be a reasonable assumption since rumors of Frémont's dismissal really did not start circulating until after the martial law/emancipation edict. However, there were so many claims of corruption in the Western Department, as in the War Department in general, that eventually, Lincoln must have recognized the potential for scandal if he did not remove Frémont, provided

---

<sup>36</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 493-94.

<sup>37</sup> Abraham Lincoln to David Hunter, September 9, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, "The Blairs and Fremont," 233, 236; Nevins, *Frémont*, 494.

<sup>39</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 316.

<sup>40</sup> Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 177

the rumors were true.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of what the final straw was for Lincoln, by late October 1861, he had made up his mind to remove Frémont from command.

Lincoln realized that removing Frémont could go against popular opinion and alienate radicals in Congress. Frémont represented to the abolitionists their best hope of ending slavery as quickly as possible since they were aware that Lincoln was still hesitant towards the idea.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, he had to continue to investigate the claims of inefficiency and corruption that were occurring under Frémont's watch. If true, he could use this as a justification for his removal, without necessarily angering the radicals and the Northern public.

Lincoln's initial investigation into Frémont's activities was carried out by Montgomery Blair and Montgomery C. Meigs, Blair's brother-in-law and Lincoln's Quartermaster General, who went to Missouri to fact-find for the President and ascertain for themselves what Frémont was up to.<sup>43</sup> Their inquest determined that Frémont was "stupefied & almost unconscious, & is doing absolutely nothing," and Lincoln began gearing up for his removal.<sup>44</sup> But, perhaps not wanting to rely solely on the Blairs who had so quickly abandoned their protégé, Lincoln also sent Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas to look into Frémont's undertakings.<sup>45</sup> Thomas sent his scathing report to Lincoln, and Lincoln decided to send this information to the newspapers, probably in an attempt to gain public support for Frémont's removal.<sup>46</sup> But by this time, he had already made up his mind that Frémont's time was up.

---

<sup>41</sup> Reynolds, *Abe*, 675-77; Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 262; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 395.

<sup>42</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 545.

<sup>43</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 207.

<sup>44</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 393.

<sup>45</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 207.

<sup>46</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 395.

Lincoln had been as patient with Frémont as he had been with many of his Civil War generals, but the emancipation edict and the investigations into his conduct were enough to warrant his firing. On October 24, 1861, Lincoln sent the order removing Frémont from command with his good friend, Leonard Swett.<sup>47</sup> However, Lincoln also provided Swett with a list of conditions for potentially keeping Frémont in place.<sup>48</sup> Upon his arrival, Frémont seemed to be ready to go into battle, which was one of the conditions that Lincoln had directed in his removal order to allow Frémont to retain his command. Frémont capitalized on this contingency and staved off the various messengers that approached him until November 2. However, it quickly became apparent that Frémont would not be leading troops into battle, and the removal order stood.<sup>49</sup>

Frémont was no longer in control of the Western Department, and the command now passed to David Hunter. This was the same Hunter who would, somewhat ironically, pass his own emancipation edict later in the war.<sup>50</sup> But for the time being, Frémont's reputation was once again tarnished. His career, which had very much been built for him by the Bentons and the Blairs, had seen many highs and lows. He had been a success as an explorer, lost his prestige with the court-martial, had been promoted but then failed politically as a Presidential candidate, and had now been removed from power as a politically appointed general. He desperately needed to do something to revive his image.

Lincoln knew that his decision would harm Frémont, but he had no personal animosity towards him and did not desire to see his reputation suffer. He, therefore,

---

<sup>47</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 395.

<sup>48</sup> Work, *Lincoln's Political Generals*, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 540.

<sup>50</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 542; Donald, *Lincoln*, 363.

appointed him early in 1862 to a command over the Mountain Department in the Shenandoah Valley, in a move designed to placate both Frémont personally, and the radicals in the North.<sup>51</sup> Frémont readily accepted the command, eager to prove himself to the public and the Lincoln administration, but it once again quickly fell apart. Frémont was up against the forces of Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, who proved to be a worthy adversary.<sup>52</sup> Not only did Frémont have the odds stacked against him, but he once again proved inept at following directives and wanted to strike out on his own, despite this having worked against him in the Western Department.

Notably, Frémont received much more attention from the Lincoln administration in this command than he did in Missouri. This is probably due to both the fact that his new command was closer to the capital and therefore felt more pressing than the fighting in Missouri, but also because Frémont had already shown that he needed direction. Telegraphs from the War Department to Frémont on the battlefields show the administration’s hesitancy to allow Frémont much unchallenged authority, with one even seemingly alluding to the emancipation controversy in Missouri. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton wrote to Frémont directly to “issue no proclamation” against the rebels on April 8, 1862.<sup>53</sup> Other telegraphs show that the War Department was aware of Frémont’s requests for more troops and was actively working to supply him, although their efforts would eventually be unsuccessful.<sup>54</sup> Despite Lincoln’s attempt to keep Frémont on a short leash, the general was still unable to find success on the battlefield.

---

<sup>51</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 428.

<sup>52</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 355.

<sup>53</sup> Edwin M. Stanton to John C. Frémont, telegram, March 28, 1862, #2323/1, Box 1, Frémont Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>54</sup> Edwin M. Stanton to John C. Frémont, telegram, April 8, 1862, #2323/6, Box 1, Frémont Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Stonewall Jackson was proving to be a force to be reckoned with in the Shenandoah, and Frémont was proving to be just as unorganized and aloof as he had ever been. When Washington received word that Jackson was preparing to move his forces, the administration directed Frémont to move his as well, although admittedly what they asked was “too ambitious.”<sup>55</sup> While Frémont actually fought a battle at Cross Keys during this command, he remained unable to crush Jackson.<sup>56</sup> According to Colonel Albert Tracy, one of Frémont’s subordinates, the higher-ups in Washington had communicated to Frémont that should he fail to take on Jackson, he would not be afforded further military opportunities.<sup>57</sup>

Engaging the well-equipped and skilled Jackson would have been difficult for any commander, but for one like Frémont, it proved impossible to force the troops into action. As discussed by Tracy, the men did attempt to follow the directives of the Lincoln administration, and their general, Frémont, but they proved unable to stop Jackson, perhaps due to the discrepancy in the number of troops, with the Confederates having the advantage.<sup>58</sup> Once again, Lincoln found himself frustrated by Frémont and questioning his capabilities. But this time, he chose not to fire him.

Despite Lincoln’s exasperation with his general, he was willing to keep him in command. However, he was unwilling to allow him unchecked authority, and he made the decision to appoint General John Pope as a superior over Frémont, Nathaniel P. Banks, and Irvin McDowell.<sup>59</sup> This enraged Frémont, who hated Pope because of his

---

<sup>55</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 356.

<sup>56</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 220.

<sup>57</sup> Tracy, “Fremont’s Pursuit of Jackson,” 181.

<sup>58</sup> Tracy, “Fremont’s Pursuit of Jackson,” 186.

<sup>59</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 223.

perceived insubordination during Frémont's command in Missouri.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Tracy wrote in his diary that "if there existed upon the face of the earth an enemy of the General, open or covert, it was Pope."<sup>61</sup> So, when Frémont received word of Pope's appointment, he voluntarily relinquished his command.<sup>62</sup> This may have saved Lincoln the headache of having to fire him yet again at a later date because he was not making the progress necessary for victory. Regardless, Frémont had once again proved temperamental and impetuous.

Yet for all his faults, Frémont certainly commanded loyalty among his subordinates. According to Colonel Tracy, the scene upon Frémont's resignation among the troops was like that of the scene in Missouri, with the men saddened and angry at the decision.<sup>63</sup> Frémont too was likely saddened and angry at the situation as well, and he began to direct some of that anger toward Lincoln and his administration, particularly the still-influential Blairs. Lincoln, for his part, perhaps began to believe the charges of Frémont's lack of capabilities.

While Lincoln never necessarily came out and said anything against Frémont, it has become clear that he did not want to give the general a third chance, having squandered his first two. Many people, including Thaddeus Stevens, a notable Radical Republican in Congress, requested that Lincoln give Frémont yet another command.<sup>64</sup> There were even suggestions after the Emancipation Proclamation allowed African

---

<sup>60</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 562.

<sup>61</sup> Albert Tracy, "Fremont's Pursuit of Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley: The Journal of Colonel Albert Tracy, March- July 1862," ed. Francis F. Wayland, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 70, no. 3 (July 1962): 351.

<sup>62</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 474.

<sup>63</sup> Tracy, "Fremont's Pursuit of Jackson," 352.

<sup>64</sup> Work, *Lincoln's Political Generals*, 212.

American troops to serve in the Army that he lead a group of these men.<sup>65</sup> Many were eager to get him back into the field, but this was clearly because of his reputation as an abolitionist and not based on his successes as a general. However, Lincoln denied all of these requests, stating “It would please Frémont’s friends and displease the conservatives.”<sup>66</sup> Frémont surely learned of these denials, and as he already wanted revenge against the Blairs for their role in his Missouri removal, he then turned his attention to retaliating against the entire Lincoln administration. The Presidential election of 1864 would give him the perfect opportunity to seek that revenge.

---

<sup>65</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 224-25.

<sup>66</sup> Work, *Lincoln’s Political Generals*, 212.

## CHAPTER V

### LINCOLN VERSUS FRÉMONT

The 1864 Presidential election was anything but certain to go in Abraham Lincoln's favor, but the addition of the candidacy of John C. Frémont truly threw things into disarray. Lincoln was battling against Democratic nominee George B. McClellan, former leader of the Army of the Potomac and General in Chief of the U.S. Army, and now one of his chief political rivals.<sup>1</sup> But, for a while, it was not even a guarantee that Lincoln would be the Republican candidate to go against McClellan in November 1864. There had been a succession of one-term Presidents before Lincoln, reaching all the way back to Andrew Jackson, so the precedent for re-nomination seemed slim to begin with. And, Lincoln had not agreed completely with many of the more radical members of the Republican Party.<sup>2</sup> The Republicans considered other names, including Salmon P. Chase, Ulysses S. Grant, Benjamin F. Butler, and even John C. Frémont.<sup>3</sup> And while Frémont may not have seemed to have been a huge challenger, his foray back into politics would result in a shakeup of the Lincoln administration, as he found his revenge against Lincoln and his former patrons, the Blairs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 395.

<sup>2</sup> Larry T. Balsamo, "We Cannot Have Free Government without Elections": Abraham Lincoln and the Election of 1864," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 94, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 182.

<sup>3</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 478.

By 1864, it was clear that Frémont felt as though the Lincoln administration, Lincoln himself, and the Blairs were all singling him out. After his failures in Missouri and the resignation of his Shenandoah command, Frémont quickly ventured on to New York City to await further instructions, as he was still a Union general.<sup>4</sup> But, he never received those instructions. Why did Lincoln decide not to give Frémont another chance? Clearly his record suggested to Lincoln that he would not necessarily fare better the third time around. And while Lincoln may have been forgiving, it was clear his patience with Frémont had worn thin.

Lincoln had hesitated to fire Frémont and stalled for as long as he could in Missouri. Then, he had seen Frémont's true colors in the East when he decided to quit after Lincoln directed him to serve under Pope. In fact, there is some evidence that his granting of the Shenandoah command was done somewhat begrudgingly. Historian Ronald C. White Jr. notes that Lincoln met with members of the Committee on the Conduct of the War in March 1862, and they were considering Frémont to replace McClellan. However, Lincoln felt as though this would not be a good fit due to his dealings in Missouri.<sup>5</sup> Already uncertain about reappointing Frémont, Lincoln certainly must have felt exasperated with Frémont's conduct after his second stint in command, and proved unwilling to allow him to continue his leadership in a third capacity.

Once Frémont realized he would not receive another command, he seemed inclined to leave the political scene behind. But, the desire for revenge had to be strong, as his personality was not a very forgiving one. This can be seen by his animosity towards West Point in general following his court-martial debacle, and towards John

---

<sup>4</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 234.

<sup>5</sup> White, Jr., *A. Lincoln*, 481.

Pope after his perceived insubordination during Frémont's Missouri command.<sup>6</sup> Not only would Frémont have been angry with Lincoln for firing him, but he must have felt as though the Blairs were the ones pulling the strings, after everything he had been through with Frank in Missouri, and after Blair Sr. scolded Jessie following her visit with Lincoln. One thing Frémont may or may not have noticed, however, was just how much of a break had developed between himself, Lincoln, and the Blairs over the course of the past several years.

By the time the 1864 Presidential election rolled around, it had been eight years since John C. Frémont had been the unsuccessful Republican candidate for President. Nearly a decade ago, Lincoln had stumped on Frémont's behalf, despite his reservations about the candidate.<sup>7</sup> Now, that same man was challenging him for the Republican nomination, three years after their animosities culminated in Lincoln's firing of Frémont. But clearly, that animosity did not exist for long on Lincoln's part, as he had given Frémont a second chance in the Shenandoah. Lincoln even claimed later that he had no ill will toward Frémont, so indeed the hostility seems to be quite one-sided.<sup>8</sup> But Frémont felt enough of what one historian has called "everlasting enmity" to warrant a campaign against Lincoln, in the most literal sense.<sup>9</sup> And so, two men who had put so much faith in each other in the 1856 election and the early years of the Civil War were set to face off in 1864.

---

<sup>6</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 98; Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 474.

<sup>7</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 1191.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolay and Hay quote Lincoln as saying "I thought well of Frémont. Even now I think well of his impulses. I only think he is the prey of wicked and designing men, and I think he has absolutely no military capacity." See Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, chap. 23, Kindle.

<sup>9</sup> John G. Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency* (New York: Crown Books, 1997), chap. 11, Kindle.

As the election of 1864 approached, the Republicans began to lose faith in Lincoln, and some even looked for a new candidate to challenge him for the nomination. For some of the more radical Republicans, John C. Frémont seemed to be the man. To Frémont, it must have seemed to be the perfect opportunity to restore his reputation. After a failed election bid, a failed military command, and a decline in personal popularity after the claims of his corruption in Missouri, Frémont would have been looking for any avenue back to redemption. He had already received such vindication from the Committee on the Conduct of the War, who exonerated him of the corruption charges, but he still may have sought something to permanently cement his legacy as a positive one.<sup>10</sup> And, perhaps “General Jessie,” as she was called by her critics in the Civil War era, was again a driving force for another campaign, despite knowing it was a long shot.<sup>11</sup> In addition to all this, the desire for revenge was a powerful motivator, as seen by the back channel deals that would end the election saga.

Before Frémont could make his mark on the Lincoln administration, he needed a campaign and a voting bloc. Luckily for him, the campaign was largely out of his hands, with radical Republicans essentially running it for him, including such big names as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, Wendell Phillips, and Horace Greeley.<sup>12</sup> Most of Frémont’s support in the campaign came from the large German population in the North that supported him during his tenure in the Western Department.<sup>13</sup> But, many radicals also supported Frémont over Lincoln, as they felt the Emancipation Proclamation

---

<sup>10</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 473.

<sup>11</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 296, 343.

<sup>12</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 230.

<sup>13</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 577.

had not gone far enough.<sup>14</sup> Frémont once again took up the cause of the abolitionists. People living in the West too, especially if they were German, radicals, or both, tended to go for Frémont.<sup>15</sup> This group perhaps felt as though Frémont, who had already shown he was willing to push the envelope, might go further.

Frémont's campaign slugged along through early 1864. To make the nomination official, a large meeting was advertised on his behalf for May 31 in Cleveland, Ohio, at the Cosmopolitan Hall.<sup>16</sup> When the time came for the meeting, however, only about four hundred people showed up, certainly not the grand showing Frémont's supporters had been hoping for, and definitely not enough to carry him into the White House.<sup>17</sup> Frémont was not likely an actual challenger for the Presidency, and he knew this, but it was a very real threat to the Republican hopes for retaining the office, as the vote could easily have been split and handed the office to McClellan.<sup>18</sup> Hoping to avoid what the Democrats had done in 1860 to make Lincoln president, the Republicans knew they had to come together. And yet Frémont proved less willing to bow out of the race than some people would have guessed.

Not valuing party unity as much as other Republicans, Frémont looked for the best way to capitalize on his candidacy while still seeking his revenge against Lincoln and the Blairs. His very presence as a candidate was somewhat troubling to Lincoln, who wrote to a Republican constituent in August about Frémont's campaign, which he claimed was giving him more anxiety than even the Democratic convention.<sup>19</sup> Despite

---

<sup>14</sup> Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln*, chap. 11, Kindle.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard Newman, "Opposition to Lincoln in the Elections of 1864," *Science & Society*, 8, no. 4 (Fall 1944): 314.

<sup>16</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 574.

<sup>17</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 624.

<sup>18</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 577.

<sup>19</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3757-58.

generating loyalty among some Republicans and fear among many others, Frémont opted to drop out of the Presidential race on September 22, 1864.<sup>20</sup> In his public statement, he wrote that the Lincoln administration had been “politically, militarily, and financially a failure, and that its necessary continuance is a cause of regret for the country.”<sup>21</sup> He also made it clear that his purpose in dropping out was not to help Lincoln but to prevent the election of McClellan, who would turn his back on the antislavery gains made in the war, which Frémont had always supported. When it came down to it, Frémont recognized that four more years of Lincoln “was simply the lesser of two evils.”<sup>22</sup>

But, the main effect of Frémont’s withdrawal was not just a footnote on history, it was a shakeup of Lincoln’s cabinet. Frémont showed his real personality in his decision to drop out, doing so not merely for political unity among the Republicans, but to advance his own causes in taking down the Blairs. Frémont may have failed to make a name for himself in 1864 but did succeed in having Montgomery Blair removed from Lincoln’s cabinet.

Due to the nature of the Blair family’s relationship with Lincoln, Montgomery Blair was one of Lincoln’s most trusted advisors as a member of his cabinet. He had been the Postmaster General since early 1861, and although Lincoln had not always listened to him, especially in regard to issues of slavery, he valued his input and had called him “a true friend”.<sup>23</sup> At several points in time, Montgomery Blair had said to Lincoln that should it ever benefit Lincoln to have his resignation from the cabinet, he would be glad

---

<sup>20</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 232.

<sup>21</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3752.

<sup>22</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 581.

<sup>23</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 466, 658.

to tender it.<sup>24</sup> Partially because of John C. Frémont, that time came towards the end of Lincoln's first term.

In a roundabout way, Frémont's withdrawal from the 1864 Presidential election ensured that Blair would have to leave the cabinet. Republican Senator from Michigan Zachariah Chandler met with Frémont in the late summer of 1864. Chandler's purpose, having already met with Lincoln, was to get Frémont to agree to a bargain he had put together. Chandler's ultimate goal was to reconcile with the more radical members of the Republican Party, such as Benjamin Wade and Henry Winter Davis, and get them to support Lincoln's reelection bid.<sup>25</sup> To attempt this, he brokered a deal involving Wade, Davis, Lincoln, Blair, and Frémont. The Radicals would pledge their support to Lincoln's re-election campaign if Lincoln dismissed the conservative Blair.<sup>26</sup> Lincoln, however, did not seem very amenable to this proposal.<sup>27</sup> So, Chandler attempted to persuade Lincoln by telling him that if he fired Blair, he would maneuver to get Frémont out of the race, better securing Lincoln's chances of successful re-election. When Frémont dropped out of the race, Lincoln knew the *quid pro quo* had taken effect and was ready to do what needed to be done.<sup>28</sup> However, the strongly worded letter that Frémont published announcing his departure from the race was so off-putting to Lincoln that he nearly avoided fulfilling his part in the bargain.<sup>29</sup> But he proved to value the prospect of a

---

<sup>24</sup> Records of this come from Lincoln's letter requesting Blair's resignation. See Abraham Lincoln to Montgomery Blair, September 23, 1864, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 533.

<sup>26</sup> Gerhardt, *Lincoln's Mentors*, 374.

<sup>27</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 534.

<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that many historians consider Frémont's withdrawal and Blair's firing to be two separate events. Charles R. Wilson, Allan Nevins, and Andrew Rolle all deny Frémont's role in Blair's firing, and contend that he did not explicitly condone a bargain. This does not, however, mean that Chandler did not orchestrate a bargain involving Frémont, perhaps even without his knowledge. Wilson, "New Light," 75; Nevins, *Frémont*, 660; Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 232.

<sup>29</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3752.

second term better than he valued a cabinet member who had become increasingly tempestuous and difficult to deal with.<sup>30</sup> Still, for Lincoln, it was a very personal loss to see Montgomery Blair go.

The President had valued the Blairs as personal and political friends from his earliest days in office. Yet, the political situation had simply lined up against them. The day after Frémont dropped out of the race, Lincoln wrote to Montgomery Blair, recalling Blair's promise that he would voluntarily leave office should it benefit Lincoln, and asked him to write his resignation letter.<sup>31</sup> Blair promptly responded on the same day with his resignation.<sup>32</sup> According to Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, Blair was overcome with emotion the day he resigned, blaming Frémont's schemes.<sup>33</sup> Surely it would have felt more like a firing than a resignation, knowing that the only thing he had done to warrant such a result was to be on the wrong side of the political divide that had coalesced around Lincoln and Frémont.

This is the narrative as some historians see it, anyway. Others have questioned why Frémont withdrew from the race, and there have been many theories floated around about what type of bargain was made, if one ever really was made in the first place. Charles R. Wilson and Allan Nevins challenged this narrative in the 1930s, but it has largely remained the conventional account of the election. It is worth noting some of their claims, however. Nevins claims that Frémont had no part in the bargain and that it was instead only the radicals like Wade and Davis that manipulated Chandler and Lincoln for

---

<sup>30</sup> Gerhardt, *Lincoln's Mentors*, 374.

<sup>31</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Montgomery Blair, September 23, 1864, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Montgomery Blair to Abraham Lincoln, September 23, 1864, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Gerhardt, *Lincoln's Mentors*, 375.

Blair's resignation.<sup>34</sup> Wilson builds on Nevins's assertions, also arguing that Frémont in fact nearly decided to defer his candidacy in favor of McClellan and the Democrats.<sup>35</sup> But many historians still turn to the account that sees Frémont withdrawing from the race of his own volition not simply to save the Republican Party, but to put an end to Montgomery Blair.

It seems likely that the truth is somewhere in between these two extremes. In Wilson's article on the 1864 bargain, he wrote that Frémont's letter of withdrawal does not bear the words of someone who has made a backroom deal "even if he be a sorrowful and disappointed man."<sup>36</sup> However, Wilson may have failed to fully appreciate just how personally Frémont had taken the events of the preceding years, and how deeply he was able to hold a grudge against Lincoln and the Blairs. Frémont himself spoke of his differences with Lincoln and the Blairs, and it stands to reason that this would have been a huge motivator for him to try to reap the rewards of the end of his second Presidential run by getting to Montgomery Blair.<sup>37</sup> But there still might be more to the story.

It is not too naïve to say that the Radicals may have been maneuvering and perhaps even used Frémont as a pawn in their game to rid the cabinet of the conservative voice of Blair. The historical fact is that Zachariah Chandler did indeed go to see John C. Frémont in August of 1864 to discuss his candidacy and its impact on the Republican Party.<sup>38</sup> The mystery lies in figuring out if there was a deal cut or not. And yet another, perhaps overlooked, historical fact is that Frémont had another visitor that month, John

---

<sup>34</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 659.

<sup>35</sup> Wilson, "New Light," 74.

<sup>36</sup> Wilson, "New Light," 76.

<sup>37</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 214.

<sup>38</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 534.

Greenleaf Whittier, the famous poet, and a good friend of John and Jessie Frémont.

According to Whittier's writings, Jessie believed that his intercession on behalf of getting Lincoln re-elected would be the intervention that changed John's mind about running against him.<sup>39</sup> All things considered, maybe the "bargain" of 1864 is even more complex than historians have speculated on.

This seems to unveil a third option to the story. It becomes possible that Frémont was not entirely out of the loop in terms of political deal-making, and that the Radicals did try to bring him in on it, but also that he did not completely hinge the end of his candidacy on Blair's resignation. Maybe, upon talking to Chandler and realizing that the Radicals could maneuver for the end of Blair, Frémont was ready to take the final step and fully withdraw from the race. But perhaps Whittier had already heavily influenced him to that end before a "deal" manifested. Perhaps Frémont was indeed "used as a tool by smoother politicians," who made a deal for their own benefits and made it look as though Frémont was behind it.<sup>40</sup> Or, perhaps he felt compelled to withdraw from the race because of Whittier's influence, coupled with Chandler's promise of Blair's resignation. When considering Frémont's personal vendetta against the Blair family, this seems to be the more likely option. He may have wanted his chance to take Lincoln down, but upon realizing this was impossible, settled for Blair.

As it turned out, Lincoln and Frémont had reached the pinnacle of their relationship in the 1864 election, having gone from essentially supporting each other's political aspirations to becoming emancipators at odds with each other, and finally to full-blown political opponents. Along the way, Frémont had, perhaps unwittingly, influenced

---

<sup>39</sup> Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln*, chap. 22, Kindle.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, "The Blairs and Fremont," 255.

Lincoln's decision to emancipate the slaves in the Southern rebellious areas. However, Frémont attempted to apply emancipation to the border states, which Lincoln was not yet ready to do, although he proved more willing to press the border states a year later. At the time, Frémont may not have received the credit he deserved from Lincoln, or from historians later on, in terms of his influence on emancipation, but he did manage to solidify his name in the history books with his run against Lincoln for the Republican nomination.

Historians have generally agreed that Frémont stood even less of a chance at the Presidency in 1864 than he did in 1856. Not only was he running a third-party campaign with a rather small constituency, but even Frémont himself recognized that his chances of victory were minute.<sup>41</sup> He certainly retained the support of a few stalwart voters, but with a third-party ticket, it was unlikely that he would see the type of electoral turnout that he got in 1856. And, even then it had not been enough to secure the Presidency. Even at the time, many people did not take Frémont's candidacy seriously. Some ardent abolitionists, like Charles Sumner and William Lloyd Garrison, were unwilling to back the Frémont ticket because they knew he was going to be unsuccessful. Garrison indeed wrote that Frémont "has not shown a single state, a single county, a single town or hamlet in his support."<sup>42</sup> With public comments such as these becoming the norm about the Frémont campaign, it became clear to the Lincoln administration that the big threat was George B. McClellan, not John C. Frémont.

Despite this, however, Lincoln probably knew Frémont could siphon away votes. Michael Burlingame has argued that Lincoln endorsed the constitutional amendment

---

<sup>41</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 229.

<sup>42</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 573.

abolishing slavery to draw radicals away from the Frémont camp.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, many Republicans were convinced that the only solution was for both Lincoln and Frémont to withdraw from the race in favor of someone else. Frémont wrote on August 25 that he would be willing to do this, if Lincoln did as well.<sup>44</sup> Lincoln's response to this exact proposal is unknown, but he probably did not consider this a realistic option, especially having already obtained the Republican nomination and feeling as though it was his duty to continue on.

His fears notwithstanding, Lincoln downplayed Frémont's threat privately several times. John Hay reminisced on the election of 1864 with Lincoln saying that Frémont was like the brother of a man named Jim Jett, and that "Jim used to say that his brother was the damndest scoundrel that ever lived, but in the infinite mercy of Providence he was also the damndest fool."<sup>45</sup> Clearly, Lincoln was not fond of his memories of his interactions with Frémont. In addition, Nicolay and Hay recount that upon Lincoln's being told of the four hundred that assembled in Cleveland for Frémont's nomination, he picked up a Bible and read: "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."<sup>46</sup> Despite Lincoln's attempts to minimize the danger of Frémont's candidacy, the threat may have been more serious.

Frémont may have posed some sort of risk to a Republican victory. He was the only Republican challenger to Lincoln in 1864 that had an actual ticket and might have

---

<sup>43</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3634.

<sup>44</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3694.

<sup>45</sup> Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, 388.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 9, chap. 2, Kindle.

siphoned away votes.<sup>47</sup> Had Frémont stayed in the race, or worse, withdrawn in favor of McClellan and the Democrats, Lincoln may very well have not been re-elected in 1864.<sup>48</sup> This could have had dire consequences for victory in the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the passage of the Civil War Amendments. As it turned out though, Frémont, whether culpable in the scheme to get Blair out of office, or simply getting satisfaction out of the way things played out, did not derail Lincoln's campaign and his quest for a second term. The radicals, German Americans, and essentially the entirety of the Republican Party chose to rally around their President in the wake of Blair's firing.<sup>49</sup> Once again, Lincoln would triumph where Frémont had failed, going on to win his second term over McClellan as Frémont faded into poverty, obscurity, and history.

---

<sup>47</sup> Robert E. Lowe, "Lincoln, the Fall of Atlanta, and the 1864 Presidential Election," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 269.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, "New Light," 74.

<sup>49</sup> Arthur C. Cole, "President Lincoln and the Illinois Radical Republicans," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 4, no. 4 (March 1918): 435.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, fortunes changed drastically for John C. Frémont. In early 1865, Joseph Medill, a Republican constituent and an Abraham Lincoln supporter, wrote to Lincoln asking him to give Frémont an appointment to the French Court. He mentioned Frémont's enduring popularity among radicals, but also noted that "it is a rather imprudent thing to propose his name to you after his course towards you. But some few have got it into their heads that 'Father Abraham' has got no revenge in his nature and that his magnanimity is boundless," alluding both towards the 1864 election and trying to appeal to Lincoln's capacity for forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> However, nothing came about as a result of Medill's letter, and Frémont unsurprisingly remained without a role in the new Lincoln administration.

Frémont remained a notable figure among those who had been abolitionists, but it would be years before he would serve in another official capacity. In the decades after the Civil War, Frémont became a railroad investor and later became Governor of Arizona by the appointment of Rutherford B. Hayes.<sup>2</sup> Yet even in this post, Frémont was unable to find success, being essentially forced into resignation because of how little time he

---

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Medill to Abraham Lincoln, January 15, 1865, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Nevins, *Frémont*, 587, 603.

actually spent in Arizona.<sup>3</sup> But Frémont lost it all in the Panic of 1873, and he and Jessie were left impoverished, totally reliant on her income from her writings and reminiscences.<sup>4</sup> Jessie wrote to her friend Nathaniel Banks about being, “only a ghost of the past” and that she would “confine myself to 'putting money in my purse.’”<sup>5</sup> Once again, Jessie was in control of the future of the Frémonts. This time, however, she proved to be more helpful than hindering, with her works becoming relatively popular, and they were able to make it until 1890 when John contracted peritonitis and quickly died.<sup>6</sup> Jessie then had to fight to get a Civil War widow’s pension from the U.S. government.<sup>7</sup> An understated ending to the bold life of John C. Frémont.

In the aftermath of Frémont’s death, the country did not see a huge sweep of mourning like there was in the aftermath of Abraham Lincoln’s passing in 1865. Of course, Frémont had lived a relatively long life, died of natural causes, and was not the holder of a public office by 1890, whereas Lincoln’s life was cut short by an assassin’s bullet while still in office. Lincoln’s death saw the nation shaken to its core, with a huge outpouring of grief as his funeral train processed from Washington D.C. back to his home in Illinois.<sup>8</sup> Frémont too died far from home, in New York, while Jessie was still at home in California. But his passing was as unceremonious as his funeral and burial, both of which happened in New York due to a lack of funds to bring him back to California, to little public fanfare.<sup>9</sup> John was buried in a simple coffin in a suit per his request, rather

---

<sup>3</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 255.

<sup>4</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 352.

<sup>5</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 356, 379.

<sup>6</sup> Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, 496.

<sup>7</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 375.

<sup>8</sup> Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, 4052.

<sup>9</sup> Rolle, *John Charles Frémont*, 267.

than his military uniform.<sup>10</sup> Lincoln and Frémont- two men destined to have their stories intertwined, but two very different outcomes for their lives and legacies.

Despite Abraham Lincoln's death coming a mere five months after the November 1864 Presidential election, and only seven months after John C. Frémont wrote his scathing letter of withdrawal from the Presidential race, Lincoln's shadow hung over Frémont for the rest of his life. No matter what he attempted to do, it seemed that his legacy had already formed itself twice over. As he approached old age, the number of people who remembered him as a young explorer dwindled, becoming replaced with many people who remembered him as a bumbling general and would-be emancipator. With Lincoln's legacy quickly becoming enshrined in American memory, Frémont's legacy, and those of many other Lincoln contemporaries, was never able to measure up. Although Frémont certainly would have been content in his final years to be remembered as the daring young Pathfinder, his failures in his middle-aged years were destined to be a stain on his legacy. Even Jessie's pension as a Civil War widow would be a lasting testament to Frémont's true legacy- not as a bold, youthful, successful explorer, but as one of Lincoln's failed Union generals.

Had Frémont stayed out of politics, or even gotten out of the game following his failure in the 1856 election, his reputation might have been one of greatness. True, as an explorer he followed in the footsteps of others more often than he actually found his own paths, but at the same time he helped chart a course for American expansionism, which became huge in the years following his death. His name could have become synonymous with other great explorers, but his reputation instead became a tangled mess of quarrels

---

<sup>10</sup> Denton, *Passion and Principle*, 374.

with superiors, political scheming, and betrayal of those who had helped make him.

Frémont truly was his own undoing. Having dared to take on Abraham Lincoln, he wrote his own legacy as a historical villain, guilty of anything from incompetence to threatening the preservation of the Union. For someone who had dedicated himself to the service of his country, this legacy must not be what he wanted.

Does Frémont deserve a better reputation? Does he deserve recognition for his contributions to emancipation, however premature they might have been? These questions have echoed throughout the halls of Frémont's memory for decades, and in some ways, they remain unanswered. However, one point of clarity is that Frémont's historical legacy and reputation are no match for that of Abraham Lincoln. One of the most admirable traits that Lincoln displayed throughout his career was his astonishing capacity for growth. Several prominent historians have commented on this, and continue to be in awe of it.<sup>11</sup> Frémont did not display this, preferring to stay cynical and, in some cases, entitled to a sense of destiny. Also unlike Lincoln, Frémont had loads of help on his road to success, becoming the protégé of Thomas Hart Benton and later the Blairs. Frémont's vainglorious nature may have come about from many things, from a traumatic childhood to an ego inflated by his wife and in-laws, or simply from pride in legitimate accomplishments that went a bit too far.

Frémont's complex nature is far removed from Lincoln's simplicity, and for many students of history, it is the personal appeal of Abraham Lincoln that draws so many to him. The accomplishments stand for themselves, but had he been a contemptuous person, his legacy surely would not be as secure as it is today. On the other hand, had Frémont

---

<sup>11</sup> Donald, *Lincoln*, 14; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, xix.

accomplished all that Lincoln did, his personal traits may still have been so off-putting to so many, that his accomplishments would no longer speak for themselves. That is where Frémont fails to so many historians. Of course, he made a name for himself by emancipating slaves in Missouri. But the subsequent insubordination, pomp, and schemes are too distasteful for him to have a wholly positive legacy.

Rather than castigate Frémont as a villain, or try to build a narrative around him that only points out the better parts of his traits, historians have done their due diligence in trying to find the balance of who Frémont really was, both good and bad. But it then becomes easy to tie so much of what Frémont did into his relationship with Abraham Lincoln because as his commander-in-chief, Lincoln had a huge impact on Frémont's choices for several years. And, because Frémont's past shows a history of not following the directives of his superiors, by the time a historian gets to the Lincoln-Frémont saga, it seems unsurprising that Frémont disregarded Lincoln's directives, emancipated the slaves, and then refused to modify his proclamation. It is wholly in character with who Frémont was as a person that he would do such a thing, and it seems that his legacy reflects this notion.

Controversial in his own time and contentious among historians, John C. Frémont's legacy is very different from the certainty of Abraham Lincoln's. The two men interacted with each other in many ways from 1856 until Lincoln died in 1865, and that relationship was certainly not always a positive one. But, it was an extremely important one. Without Frémont's decision to unilaterally emancipate Missouri's slaves, Lincoln would not have found himself heading in the direction of emancipation as quickly as he did. The progress of the war certainly helped matters, but without somebody willing to

take the risk, Lincoln may not have reaped the historical reward. As Lincoln himself said, the first to embrace a new challenge may not be “generally the best... to carry that movement to a successful issue.”<sup>12</sup> John C. Frémont was not destined to carry emancipation toward an effective end, Abraham Lincoln was. But, without John C. Frémont, Abraham Lincoln may not have been all he was destined to become.

---

<sup>12</sup> Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, chap. 1, Kindle.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### **Archives:**

Abraham Lincoln Papers. Digital Collections. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.  
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/abraham-lincoln-papers/>.

Alongside the *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, this online resource will be extremely valuable for understanding how the process of emancipation unfolded between Lincoln and Frémont in their own words. While the documents surrounding Frémont's time in Missouri and the Shenandoah will be helpful, this collection also contains materials surrounding Lincoln's decision-making in regards to the Emancipation Proclamation, which could help further the thesis argument.

John Charles Frémont and Jessie Benton Frémont Papers, 1828-1980. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

These papers were an incredible resource, but the Civil War file within them is fairly limited in terms of Frémont's contacts with Lincoln, except indirectly through the War Department. The file does contain, however, several telegraphs to and from Frémont during the war, one of which is from his Shenandoah command and orders him not to issue any proclamations, showing that the government was still feeling the ramifications from his emancipation edict in Missouri. Other points of interest include a campaign flyer spelling out Lincoln's involvement in the 1856 election on Frémont's behalf, and a letter written to Lincoln by Missouri soldiers urging him not to fire Frémont.

The Lincoln Archives Digital Project. <http://www.lincolnarchives.us>.

Despite some organizational issues that lead to interesting citational problems, this website is a treasure trove in Lincoln studies, and contains information on multiple Civil War generals, including Frémont, as well as detailed studies of what Lincoln was doing on any given day. Some of these "journal entries" have illuminated cabinet meetings in which Frémont was discussed, which are not often mentioned in other works, as well as correspondence concerning Frémont among individuals close to Lincoln.

#### **Articles:**

Stoddard, W.O. "The Story of a Nomination." *North American Review* 138, no. 328 (March 1884): 263-73.

This source, written only 20 years after the 1864 election, gives great insights into the difficulties encountered by Lincoln on the path to re-nomination. One of those difficulties was getting the Grand Council of the collective Union Leagues across the country to endorse the nomination. Without their endorsement, Stoddard claims that

Lincoln's chances at the Baltimore convention would have been slim. This article contains good information and a nice analysis, but does not include any cited sources. The article does include a standard narrative of Frémont's challenge to Lincoln in 1864, but is mostly useful as an overview of all the difficulties that stood in Lincoln's way in addition to Frémont's candidacy.

Tracy, Albert. "Fremont's Pursuit of Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley: The Journal of Colonel Albert Tracy, March- July 1862." Edited by Francis F. Wayland. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 70, no. 2 (April 1962): 165-93.

This article contains the first part of Colonel Albert Tracy's diary of his time with Frémont in the Shenandoah during the 1862 campaign against Stonewall Jackson. In the preface, Wayland, the editor, notes that Tracy spent much of his military career during the Civil War with Frémont, and his loyalty to "the General" is evident in his journal. Containing primary source material, this article is invaluable to understanding how Frémont's men interacted with him and understood his decision-making abilities during the heat of battle. It is, however, important to note that the journal contains biases towards Frémont because of Tracy's having worked with him in Missouri. Tracy's Missouri diary, cited in another historical journal, is also a valuable source.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Fremont's Pursuit of Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley: The Journal of Colonel Albert Tracy, March- July 1862." Edited by Francis F. Wayland. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 70, no. 3 (July 1962): 332-54.

The second installment of Albert Tracy's journal, this article looks at the actual conflict between the forces of Frémont and Jackson. It details some of the exhaustion of the troops, as insisted by Frémont in his messages to Lincoln explaining his inability to pursue Jackson, and largely backs up Frémont's claims. This journal paints a unique image of Frémont as an indefatigable general who puts every ounce of energy into pursuing his enemy with as many men as he could muster, even as he defies orders. The journal also contains an account of Frémont's resignation and its impact on his men.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Missouri In Crisis: The Journal of Captain Albert Tracy, 1861." Edited by Ray W. Irwin. *Missouri Historical Review* 51, no. 1 (October 1956): 8-21.

This is the first part of Captain Albert Tracy's Civil War diary concerning his time in Missouri. A brief introduction by the editor sheds light on Tracy's background introduces a few sources that he relies on for supplementary information to fill in the blanks in Tracy's diary. These sources include Allan Nevins' biography of Frémont, the Army's historical register, and the official records of the Civil War, although the main source for the article is Tracy's diary itself. Within this section of his diary, Tracy details his time spent defending the St. Louis arsenal at the start of the Civil War, as well as his interactions with Nathaniel Lyon.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Missouri In Crisis: The Journal of Captain Albert Tracy, 1861." Edited by Ray W. Irwin. *Missouri Historical Review* 51, no. 2 (January 1957): 151-64.

Much like part one of Captain Tracy's Civil War diary, part 2 details Tracy's movements around Missouri and his stationing at the arsenal in St. Louis. Introduced in this section of the diary is John C. Frémont, who arrived for command in July 1861. Also, like in the first diary excerpts published in a previous issue of the journal, Irwin, the editor, provides context in the footnotes concerning the people mentioned in Tracy's diary. To provide this context, he cites many of the same sources as in the first article, including the Army historical register, and referring to Nevins' work on Frémont. This article helps convey a sense of the danger faced by the Union army in Missouri, as well as its disorganization.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Missouri In Crisis: The Journal of Captain Albert Tracy, 1861." Edited by Ray W. Irwin. *Missouri Historical Review* 51, no. 3 (April 1957): 270-83.

Using many of the same sources for context as in the first two articles documenting Captain Tracy's Civil War diary, this section deals with Tracy's service directly under Frémont, and provides background information for his Shenandoah diary. Tracy receives his promotion to Colonel and accompanies Frémont on his campaign throughout Missouri in the pages of this diary. The diary also contains a description of Frémont's removal from command and the anger of the men, including Tracy himself, as the perceived injustice. This will likely be the most useful of the three articles, as it details Tracy's time with Frémont and the relationship between Frémont and his troops while in command in Missouri.

### **Books:**

Lincoln, Abraham. *Collected Works*. Edited by Roy P. Basler. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953.

This resource, which is now digitized thanks to the Abraham Lincoln Association, is a valuable tool for understanding Lincoln's perspective in regards to Frémont. It contains many of Lincoln's writings, both official and unofficial, and thanks to its digitization, is easily searchable. This work is similar in scope to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, and both contain important documents pertaining to Lincoln and Frémont, including their correspondence. Letters from Lincoln to Frémont, letters from Frémont to Lincoln, and letters to and from Lincoln concerning Frémont can all be found within this text.

Nicolay, John G., and John Hay. *Abraham Lincoln: A History*. New York: The Century Co., 1890.

This is the first major work on Abraham Lincoln's life, written by his two private secretaries and cited by many historians in later works. This ten-volume set is extensive in scope, but contains great information about Lincoln's personal thoughts and feelings towards Frémont, and many of his writings as well. This is a critical account for any Lincoln scholarship, and the background information given to the Blair family and

Frémont will greatly assist with research. Nicolay and Hay's sources were necessarily primary, and include memoirs of Civil War generals and politicians, letters and manuscripts, and their own experiences.

Ware, Eugene Fitch. *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri: Being a History of the First Iowa Infantry and of the Causes which Led up to Its Organization, and How it Earned the Thanks of Congress, which it Got. Together with a Birdseye View of the Conditions in Iowa Preceding the Great Civil War of 1861.* Topeka, KS: Crane & Company, 1907.

Sections of this work will be useful in detailing how soldiers in Missouri felt about Frémont's command and his lack of reinforcements to the soldiers fighting under Lyon. It will be important to note that over forty-five years had passed between the events under discussion and the publication of this work, but overall conclusions about soldiers' thoughts towards Frémont should remain unchanged. This could also offer nice background about the fighting in Missouri as undertaken by the First Iowa Infantry, although the background on Iowa itself prior to the Civil War is probably unnecessary to this research.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### Articles:

Abrahams, Samuel. "Lincoln's Political Opposition in 1864." *Negro History Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (October 1948): 7-9, 18.

In addition to a discussion of the activities of Salmon P. Chase and the Wade-Davis Bill, this article covers the political threat posed to Abraham Lincoln by the Radicals in the 1864 Presidential election. The article contains good information about the St. Louis German radicals who backed Frémont, and outlines the political platform adopted by the Cleveland Convention that nominated Frémont to unsuccessfully run against Lincoln in 1864. There are no sources cited in the article, but Abrahams effectively argues that McClellan's nomination and Frémont dropping out of the race assured Lincoln's victory.

Balsamo, Larry T. "'We Cannot Have a Free Government without Elections': Abraham Lincoln and the Election of 1864." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 94, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 181-99.

Balsamo's article covers several of the same topics that the Abrahams article does, but expands on the points made, especially in regards to the Democratic challenges to Lincoln in 1864. This work contains more discussion of Frémont, the way the Lincoln administration responded to his candidacy, and how his dropping out of the race led to the resignation of Montgomery Blair. The article also defines the difficulties Lincoln encountered in securing his party's re-nomination due to precedent of Presidential turnover and his break with the Radical Republicans. Balsamo cites Abraham Lincoln's

*Collected Works* frequently, as well as monographs about those in Lincoln's cabinet or his Democratic challengers.

Beckert, Sven. "Cotton and the Global Origins of Capitalism." *Journal of World History* 28, no. 1 (March 2017): 107-20.

Beckert argues that commodity-oriented histories are beneficial to the discipline and can help us understand the spread of capitalism in a less Eurocentric manner. The commodity Beckert chooses to look at is cotton. He delves briefly into the history of cotton to describe its importance to people's everyday lives. In this history he gets into the problem of slavery and agriculture, stating that slave production of cotton was central to European industrial expansion. Here he cites the example that *The Economist* claimed John C. Frémont's emancipation decree would be bad for Europe. He then claims that slavery is no longer a part of the history of capitalism. There are no citations as this was a keynote address.

Brewer, W.M. "Lincoln and the Border States." *The Journal of Negro History* 34, no. 1 (January 1949): 46-72.

A nice work on Lincoln's policies towards the border states at the beginning of the war. Brewer gives significant attention to Kentucky, as the author argues Lincoln's Kentucky birth influenced his ability to see the strategic importance of the state. The focus in terms of Missouri is on the political situation and the divide between radicals and conservatives. This contains some good information about that divide and Lincoln's reaction to it, as well as brief information about Frémont's emancipation towards the end. Frequently cited is Nicolay and Hay's account of Lincoln's life, which would have been the main source used by historians at the time of this article's publication.

Cain, Marvin R. "A 'Face of Battle' Needed: An Assessment of Motives and Men in Civil War Historiography." *Civil War History* 28, no. 1 (March 1982): 5-27.

Cain argues that there lacks a good analysis of the motivations of soldiers in Civil War historiography, and attempts to rectify the situation. By examining the various historiographic schools, Cain augments the historical discussion of the previous authors whose works he cites throughout, and pushes the conversation about the motivations of the "average" Civil War soldier forward. Two of the aspects he analyzes are the stances of Civil War soldiers towards Lincoln himself, and towards emancipation. This information could support claims about popular support for Frémont's emancipation order, or for Lincoln's revocation of it.

Cole, Arthur C. "President Lincoln and the Illinois Radical Republicans." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 4, no. 4 (March 1918): 417-36.

Cole's article discusses the relationship between Lincoln and the Radical Republicans, but not just the ones in Illinois as the title might suggest. While the early article discusses Illinois Radicals, the latter parts deal with Radicals in general, and the

article becomes less specific as it goes on. Cole discusses Radical criticisms of Lincoln's moderate policies in the early years of the war, and his slowness to commit to immediate abolition. Cole's main sources are letters, Lincoln's writings, and newspaper references. The article also provides a good discussion of Frémont's role in drawing away the support of some Radicals in the wake of his proclamation, and in the Presidential election of 1864.

Dueholm, James A. "A Bill of Lading Delivers the Goods: The Constitutionality and Effect of the Emancipation Proclamation." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 22-38.

Dueholm attempts to argue that the Emancipation Proclamation was Constitutional and could have stood on its own as a law even without the Thirteenth Amendment. By showing how Frémont's proclamation occurred at a time when emancipation was not a military necessity, Dueholm lays the groundwork for his argument that the Emancipation Proclamation was legitimate as a necessity of war. The article states that it was emancipation was imperative to Lincoln's Constitutional obligations, and that gave the Emancipation Proclamation its legality. This article relies heavily on Lincoln's writings and secondary sources about Lincoln and emancipation, and could show the importance of Frémont's proclamation on getting Lincoln to later pass the emancipation proclamation.

Egerton, Douglas R. "The Slaves' Election: Frémont, Freedom, and the Slave Conspiracies of 1856." *Civil War History* 61, no. 1 (March 2015): 35-63.

Egerton's article focuses on slave conspiracies that developed throughout the South during the 1856 Presidential election, as many slaves equated a Frémont victory with their own freedom. Egerton looks at many of these threatened uprisings and determines that only a few were real threats, yet the idea of slave conspiracies led to white paranoia with political ramifications. Egerton uses newspapers to discuss the individual slave conspiracies themselves as well as secondary monographs on slavery and overall slave conspiracies. This piece discusses the use of Frémont's name in Southern agitation, and his personal desire to remain neutral on questions of slavery during the political campaign.

Etulain, Richard W. "Abraham Lincoln: Political Founding Father of the West." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 59, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 3-22, 92-93.

This article contains much of the same information as Etulain's edited monograph, but in shorter form. He also discusses Missouri in much more detail than in his own work, but covers many of the same details that other works delve into as well. The article is a blanket study of Lincoln's relationship with many states and territories in the West, in addition to Missouri. For this project, the most useful analysis of this article will be in Lincoln's dealings with Missouri, although the background on his relationship with the other states could make for a good comparison. Etulain includes thorough

citations of many monographs and articles that relate to Lincoln's policies and practices towards the Western United States.

Fellman, Michael. "Emancipation in Missouri." *Missouri Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (October 1988): 36-56.

Fellman's article looks less at the process of emancipation in Missouri and more at the effects and aftermath. While it does briefly discuss the efforts of John C. Frémont to obtain emancipation, its focus is on the post-emancipation African American experience, from military service to daily life and changing social norms. Fellman effectively argues that emancipation briefly brought new freedoms to African Americans in Missouri before segregation took root. While Fellman uses a few secondary monographs to introduce the subject, he largely sticks to primary sources for his content, as he pulls information from letters, diaries, and court cases to show the complicated process of Missouri's emancipation. This article's primary usefulness is in examining the fears among Missourians of what emancipation would bring, versus the realities that occurred with the actual emancipation edict.

Gienapp, William E. "Abraham Lincoln and the Border States." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 13 (November 1992): 13-46.

Gienapp seeks to expand on what previous historians have written about Lincoln and the border states by extending the scope of his work to look at Lincoln's policy towards these states in the later years of the Civil War. He contends that this is an understudied part of the history of Lincoln and the border states. Rather than merely praising Lincoln, he offers a fair analysis of the President's handling of each state. Gienapp declares that Lincoln's policies in Maryland were largely successful, somewhat successful in Kentucky, and unsuccessful in Missouri. Gienapp's detailed analysis of the Missouri question paints an overarching picture of Lincoln's inability to retain order in the state. Gienapp cites mainly collected works, diaries, and memoirs, but also a few monographs on the Civil War at large.

Grant, David. "Our Nation's Hope Is She': The Cult of Jessie Fremont in the Republican Campaign Poetry of 1856." *Journal of American Studies* 42 no. 2 (August 2008): 187-213.

This article addresses the various slogans, poems, and songs associated with Jessie Benton Frémont during the 1856 Presidential Election. Grant argues that the personal narrative of the relationship between the Frémont's helped shape the discourse of the campaign, especially since there needed to be a heroic and romantic narrative in lieu of John C. Frémont's political credentials. Grant relies heavily on campaign songs from Republican songsters and newspapers, and on his own analysis of how these lyrics translate into the "cult of domesticity" that developed around Jessie Frémont to get her into the White House. This could assist my research by showing Jessie's history of political involvement prior to her visit with Lincoln on John's behalf.

Harrington, Fred Harvey. "Frémont and the North Americans." *The American Historical Review* 44, no. 4 (July 1939): 842-48.

Harrington's article discusses the little-known fact that Frémont was the 1856 Presidential nominee for both the Republican party and the Northern sect of the Know Nothing Party, the North Americans. In using many newspaper articles and letters from leaders of the various parties, Harrington argues effectively that this second nomination was a major impediment to Frémont's nomination by the Republicans. This article can help give weight to the idea that Frémont's previous nomination by a minority party as an impediment to a major party might have been part of the reason he was willing to accept a secondary nomination in 1864.

Herr, Pamela, and Mary Lee Spence. "'I Really Had Something Like the Blues': Letters from Jessie Benton Frémont to Elizabeth Blair Lee, 1847-1883." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 16-31.

This article details a series of letters written by Jessie Frémont to a friend over the course of her lifetime. The friend is the sister of Frank and Montgomery Blair, who were instrumental in both getting John C. Frémont appointed as commander of the Department of the West, but also in his removal from the position. The source for this article is Jessie Frémont's letters, published with permission of her great great-granddaughter, but there are no sources for the background material on Jessie's life. These letters could help shed light on the complicated relationship between the Frémont's and the Blairs, and give insight into the conflicts between Frémont and his Democratic father-in-law.

Karp, Matthew. "The People's Revolution of 1856." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 9, no. 4 (December 2019): 524-45.

This piece led to a realization that radicalism was the foundation of Frémont's political career, which may have been a large part of the reason for the tension in his relationship with Abraham Lincoln. Karp's argument addresses the near militant side of the Republican party during the 1856 Presidential election, claiming that the Republicans did not merely depict themselves as martyrs against the proslavery faction, but that they took up arms to radicalize Northern supporters to the antislavery cause. Karp uses newspaper sources and a host of secondary material in his argument, and discusses Frémont's nomination towards the end of the article, stating that despite his defeat, the 1856 campaign centralized slavery as the key political issue of the decade.

Lowe, Robert E. "Lincoln, the Fall of Atlanta, and the 1864 Presidential Election." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 260-89.

Primarily focused on Sherman's Atlanta campaign, this article looks at the complexities of Lincoln's 1864 run for reelection. Lowe's evidence, primarily compiled from monographs and memoirs, is heavily military focused. Though not a full military history, Lowe does examine some of the major battles, tactics, and commanders of both the Union and Confederate forces during 1864, claiming that Union victories and defeats

heavily impacted the Presidential campaign that year. This article maintains that the fall of Atlanta helped neutralize anti-Lincoln political activities in 1864, and that until his withdrawal, Frémont's bid for the Presidency was the only real threat to Lincoln. The overall claim is that Atlanta's fall was the cornerstone for solidifying Lincoln's reelection.

Newman, Leonard. "Opposition to Lincoln in the Elections of 1864." *Science & Society* 8, no. 4 (Fall 1944): 305-27.

This article discusses challenges to Lincoln in 1864, but also looks at the way in which the aim of the Civil War shifted from one of Union to one of ending slavery. It includes a discussion of Republican factionalism, and its argument rests on the idea that the 1864 election functioned as a referendum on the Thirteenth Amendment. The article also includes several reasons for why Radical Republicans wanted to break with Lincoln. In terms of Frémont, it does discuss his opposition to Lincoln and the platform planks of the Radical Democracy movement, but contends that most Republicans still backed Lincoln in 1864. Newman offers a good mixture of primary source writings/memoirs, secondary monographs, and documents from Civil War-era union leagues.

Newman, Richard S. "The Age of Emancipating Proclamations: Early Civil War Abolitionism and Its Discontents." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 137, no. 1 (January 2013): 33-55.

Newman's article tackles the various emancipation proclamations that were issued before Lincoln's during the early years of the Civil War. Armed with Congressional speeches, newspaper clippings from sources like Frederick Douglass' *Monthly*, and secondary sources on emancipation in general, Newman looks closely at the divide between radicals and conservatives in the North, and the role of the Democrats in opposing abolitionist measures. While he only goes into minor detail, he does address Frémont's proclamation along with military edicts from other commanders like Butler and Hunter, and offers a good summation of how each of the declarations differ from each other. His overall argument is each of these earlier pushes for sudden emancipation helped shape the eventual Emancipation Proclamation.

Oakes, James. "Reluctant to Emancipate?: Another Look at the First Confiscation Act." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 4 (December 2013): 458-66.

This is a fascinating take on the First Confiscation Act and Lincoln's revocation of Frémont's proclamation. Oakes argues that rather than being evidence that Lincoln was reluctant to emancipate slaves, his order to Frémont to follow section four of the Confiscation Act meant that he was instructing him to free slaves, but in a legal capacity. This viewpoint challenges the notion that Lincoln was wary of freeing slaves, and could have ramifications for the argument that he countermanded Frémont's order to appease the border states. The question becomes, what was Lincoln really trying to say with his letter to Frémont? Oakes attempts to answer this question with excerpts from letters, official records of the Civil War, and Congressional records and messages.

Phillips, Christopher. "Lincoln's Grasp of War: Hard War and the Politics of Neutrality and Slavery in the Western Border States, 1861-1862." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 2 (June 2013): 184-210.

Phillips argues that the Civil War in the border states, particularly Kentucky and Missouri, was a hard war from the beginning, despite these states remaining ostensibly loyal to the Union. Phillips uses primary source material to show that aggressive fighting in these areas had the intention of snuffing out disloyalty and proslavery sentiment in key political areas. This article contains an interesting take on Frémont's role in the border state of Missouri, looking less at his emancipation order and more at the rest of his declaration of martial law, and Lincoln's general acquiescence to all its provisions besides emancipation.

Pinsker, Matthew. "Lincoln Theme 2.0." *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 2 (September 2009): 417-40.

In this article, Pinsker analyzes the overall trends in Lincoln historiography from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the early 2000s, and then details specific historiographic details in various subfields, like Lincoln's personal and private lives. Within each of these subfields he looks at some of the major works that historians cited over time, with an emphasis on more recent historical works. Pinsker cites many studies of Lincoln and those around him, most of which are secondary monographs or collected volumes. He does discuss briefly some primary source accounts of Lincoln's life, but dismisses most of them as overexaggerated reminiscences. While there is no discussion of Frémont, this is a great example of historiography in general, and can help fill in some of the blanks about Lincoln historiography that the Peterson book does not address due to its earlier publication date.

Rivington, Kate. "In its Midst: An Analysis of One Hundred Southern-Born Anti-Slavery Activists." *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 38, no. 1 (July 2019): 45-78.

Rivington's article discusses the existence of anti-slavery Southerners, some of whom moved out of the South, and the networks they formed to try to further the anti-slavery or abolitionist cause. Rivington attempts to correct what she sees as a lack of attention devoted to this important coalition of people. While not explicitly related to Frémont, he does figure into the antislavery networks that she discusses, and is a case study for a Southern-born proponent of the anti-slavery cause. Rivington consulted several sources in her study, but the ones she cites are primarily secondary biographies on the various individuals she studies, and occasionally their own writings or autobiographies. She also consults previous scholarship on Southern anti-slavery in her effort to expand the scholarship into a discussion of anti-slavery networks.

Rolle, Andrew. "Exploring an Explorer: Psychohistory and John Charles Frémont." *Pacific Historical Review* 51, no. 2 (May 1982): 135-63.

This is an excellent incorporation of psychoanalytic history into the complicated story of John C. Frémont, which chronicles the major events of his life before delving into a psychoanalysis of Frémont's motivations and behaviors. While the article offers a good look at Frémont's life, its main strength is in the psychoanalysis section, where Rolle argues that many of Frémont's questionable decisions stemmed from a childhood marked by illegitimate birth and the early death of his father. Using sources like biographies of Frémont, his own memoirs, and the writings of psychoanalysts, the article presents a new take on the importance of Frémont's origins and helps explain some of his bizarre decision making from the viewpoint of a stunted psyche.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Exploring an Explorer: California, Psychohistory, and John C. Frémont." *Southern California Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 85-98.

This article contains much of the same information as Rolle's 1982 article, in fact some of the exact same wording in its description of Frémont's life. However, it offers a different analysis in terms of Frémont's psyche. In addition to details given to Frémont's life, Rolle also discusses a bit about psychoanalysis and history, and the need for nuanced psychoanalytical examinations of past historical figures such as Frémont. Rolle comes off as more critical of Frémont in this article, offering less of an analysis of his relationship with his father and more of a look at his narcissistic tendencies that led to his downfall as an administrator and a general. This article does not cite any material, but the information likely came from the same sources as cited in the 1982 article.

Simpson, Brooks D. "Lincoln and His Political Generals." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 63-77.

Unafraid to criticize Lincoln, Simpson's article delves into the decision-making process behind the retention of some of Lincoln's most controversial generals, many of whom earned their appointment based on politics, not military prowess. Simpson argues that Lincoln's politically-motivated appointments of these generals resulted in absolute failure on the battlefield with political repercussions by 1864. While much of Simpson's evidence attempts to tie these generals back to Lincoln and/or Ulysses S. Grant, the section on Frémont stops short of a full condemnation of Lincoln's appointment, placing most of the blame for the failed situation on Frémont himself. Most of Simpson's information comes from letters or secondary monographs.

Smith, Michael Thomas. "Corruption European Style: The 1861 Frémont Scandal and Popular Fears in the Civil War North." *American Nineteenth Century History* 10, no. 1 (March 2009): 49-69.

This is a unique take on Frémont's administration of the Department of the West that examines the public outcry against claims of his corruption. Smith claims that Lincoln did not fire Frémont based on his emancipation decree, but because of the widespread backlash against Frémont's corrupt spending and appointments. He further argues that 19th century ideals about republicanism were what led the public to associate

military and administrative competence with the health of the nation. Smith uses newspaper accounts of public backlash and private correspondence to show that a fear of moral decay was the public's main consideration in turning against Frémont.

Smith, William E. "The Blairs and Fremont." *Missouri Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (January 1929): 214-60.

This work is an extensive look at the entire saga of the Blair family and Frémont in Missouri and beyond. Greatly utilizing the Blair family papers and excerpts from the extremely pro-Frémont and anti-Blair *Daily Democrat*, Smith finds a way to toe the line between pro-Frémont and pro-Blair biases. This is a very balanced account of what happened between this massive political family and Frémont, particularly between Frémont and Frank Jr., although Montgomery plays a role as well. Francis Preston Blair Sr. does not get much attention in the article, although it is still clear that he was still the family's patriarch and his sons were following his wishes. Overall Smith's article will be useful for understanding why the relationship between Frémont and the Blairs devolved into the vitriolic mess that it became.

Tap, Bruce. "Amateurs at War: Abraham Lincoln and the Committee on the Conduct of the War." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 1-18.

This article attempts to compare Abraham Lincoln's viewpoints on the Civil War to those of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, made up primarily of Radical Republican Congressmen. Tap provides primary source evidence and thorough suggestions for background reading to substantiate his claims that the Radicals showed disdain for career military men and anyone who did not share their political views. However, it is important to note that some of this evidence comes from Tap's own previous works on the Committee. Tap claims that the Committee favored men like Frémont, who had little military experience but were strongly antislavery, despite Lincoln's sometimes opposing viewpoints. Tap sides with Lincoln over the committee, arguing that the President acted rightly in putting the war effort above political considerations.

Taylor, Grace N. "The Blair Family in the Civil War." *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 38, no. 125 (October 1940): 280-94.

The first of a three-part series, this article discusses the rise of the Blair family in national politics prior to the start of the Civil War. While mostly background material, this article contains good information that should help describe the history of the Blairs' rise to power, as well as their attempts to get Frémont elected in 1856. The article only mentions Frémont in passing, but it could be useful for its information on the Blairs, and its discussion of the process by which Lincoln became the Republican candidate in 1860.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Blair Family in the Civil War (Continued)." *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 39, no. 126 (January 1941): 47-57.

This article represents part two of a three-part take on the Blair family's contributions to American politics from Jacksonian times to Reconstruction. This section contains information on the Blair family's maneuverings to replace generals in Missouri prior to the assignment of John C. Frémont as commander of the Department of the West. It could show that the Blairs were highly influential among the Lincoln administration in terms of recommending or dismissing people for this position. Taylor's sources are largely secondary, but do contain excerpts of letters and publications of the *Congressional Globe*.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Blair Family in the Civil War (Concluded)." *Register of Kentucky State Historical Society* 39, no. 127 (April 1941): 138-56.

Part three of this series deals with the Blair family's efforts to install John C. Frémont as commander of the Department of the West before later using their influence to convince Lincoln to revoke his command. It also discusses the split of the Republican party, particularly in Missouri, into radicals and conservatives. The Radicals went on to try to run Frémont for President in 1864, leading to the resignation of Montgomery Blair. This is a good work for showing that the Blairs were ultimately responsible for what happened with Frémont, both good and bad. The main sources for part three are the *Congressional Globe* and the official records of the Civil War.

Turkoly-Joczik, Robert L. "Fremont and the Western Department." *Missouri Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (July 1988): 363-85.

In this article, Turkoly-Joczik is very sympathetic towards Frémont from the beginning, and he essentially argues that Frémont had more successes than he is often given credit for, while often being blamed for things that were mostly out of his control. The article provides a compelling account of the battles of Wilson's Creek and Lexington, as well as the issues surrounding Frémont's emancipation edict and accusations of corruption. Turkoly-Joczik refutes all negative claims surrounding Frémont without resorting to hagiography, as he does concede several faults or times when a better decision might have been made. There are not many references to Lincoln, but this article's arguments and conclusions will still be extremely helpful for the thesis.

Volpe, Vernon L. "The Frémonts and Emancipation in Missouri." *The Historian* 56, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 339-54.

In this article, Volpe attempts to restore the historical reputation of John C. Frémont by claiming that he and his wife, Jessie, were key players in the early movement for abolition, and that historians overlook their contributions due to Frémont's emancipation edict. Using memoirs from Jessie Frémont, Missouri newspaper accounts, and many secondary sources, Volpe argues convincingly that Frémont issued his proclamation based on his own beliefs and did not affiliate with the Radicals until afterwards. This reaffirms his claims that Frémont was an abolitionist for both personal and military reasons.

Wells, Jonathan Daniel. "The Future of Southern Intellectual History." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 352-58.

Citing some relatively new works in Southern intellectual history as well as historiographic writings, Wells explores the possibilities for future historians in this realm. Wells claims that current historiography holds that the South, rather than being an intellectual backwater focused solely on writing to preserve slavery, had a decent literary program that remains untapped by historians. Especially worthy of study, according to Wells, are the contributions of women and African Americans from the South, as well as writers who did not belong to the plantation elites. This work can help shed light on discussions about the intellectual pro-slavery climate that Frémont was born into.

White, Jonathan W. "Citizens and Soldiers: Party Competition and the Debate in Pennsylvania over Permitting Soldiers to Vote, 1861-1864." *American Nineteenth Century History* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 47-70.

White argues that instead of seeing Democratic policies towards soldier voting in the Civil War as reactionary to Republican policies, historians should recognize that Democrats formulated their own policies out of a fear of losing a healthy republic. White focuses specifically on Pennsylvania, using Philadelphia newspapers and transactions of the Pennsylvania legislature as his primary sources. However, the discussion of overall Democratic and Republican stances on soldier voting could apply to the national parties as well in a discussion of the impact of soldier votes in the 1864 election.

Williams, T. Harry. "Frémont and the Politicians." *The Journal of the American Military Foundation* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1938): 178-91.

Williams' article examines the relationship between Frémont and the Radical Republican politicians who supported him from the time of his military emancipation edict. Giving a broad overview of Frémont's career from the California days up until he dropped out of the 1864 election, Williams uses newspaper accounts and letters from manuscripts to address how Frémont connected to these radical politicians. His main claims center around the Committee on the Conduct of the War, and how the members of the committee consistently backed Frémont and tried to have him placed in command due to his beliefs regarding emancipation.

Wilson, Charles R. "New Light on the Lincoln-Blair-Fremont 'Bargain' of 1864." *The American Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (October 1936): 71-78.

Wilson provides a unique look at the potential bargain between Lincoln's supporters and Frémont in 1864, wherein Frémont would withdraw from the Presidential race in return for Lincoln asking for Montgomery Blair's resignation. Wilson contends that such a bargain never took place explicitly with Frémont in control of the negotiations, and that Frémont attempted to bargain with George McClellan and the Democrats before the Republicans. The article contains some good historiography and

cites many manuscripts, diaries, and late 19<sup>th</sup> century sources in arguing that historians have perceived the “bargain” incorrectly.

**Books:**

Bicknell, John. *Lincoln's Pathfinder: John C. Frémont and the Violent Election of 1856*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2017.

Despite its title, this work does not give much of an insight into the dynamic between Lincoln and Frémont, and is mainly, as its subtitle implies, a work on the 1856 Presidential election. This could provide useful in describing the background of the Lincoln-Frémont relationship, as it deals with Lincoln's campaigning on Frémont's behalf during the election cycle. This work also details Jessie Benton Frémont's role in the election, which could help develop the argument that her involvement in the drama between Lincoln and Frémont introduced Lincoln to another opponent well-versed in politics. Overall, Bicknell's work provides nice background information, but falls short of really delving into Lincoln and Frémont.

Burlingame, Michael. *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

A two-volume set, Burlingame's task was to create a comprehensive account of the life of Abraham Lincoln. Volume two looks at Lincoln's presidency and provides excellent background for Lincoln's decisions regarding military protocol and executive power. The work also contains into smaller “stories” about Lincoln's life. Several of those sections relate to Frémont's decisions in Missouri, his saga with Lincoln and the Blairs, and his challenges to Lincoln's re-nomination in 1864. Burlingame quotes extensively from primary sources, including the diary of John Hay and the *Collected Works* of Abraham Lincoln, as well as monographs concerning the major characters, including Frémont.

Chaffin, Tom. *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002.

This biography presents a more balanced look at Frémont than many of the Lincoln biographies do. It delves into Frémont's early years in exploration, but for this work the main area of significance is Chaffin's account of Frémont's tenure as head of the Department of the West. This work specifically mentions the role of the Blairs in Frémont's selection, his delay in arriving at his post, his military decision-making and emancipation proclamation, and finally his removal from command. Chaffin argues that Frémont had more successes than suggested by the typical narrative, but does not totally exonerate him of incompetent leadership. Chaffin cites a few Frémont biographies, but mainly primary source accounts of the Civil War, manuscripts, and diaries or autobiographies.

Denton, Sally. *Passion and Principle: John and Jessie Frémont, The Couple Whose Power, Politics, and Love Shaped Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2008.

Denton's work, along with Inskip's book, are the two best accounts of the Frémont's as a unit, and this work includes a narrative of how Jessie found herself immersed in her husband's affairs. Unlike Inskip's work, this traces the Frémont's throughout their entire lives, and provides a great account of their showdown with Lincoln. While Denton is clearly sympathetic to Frémont over Lincoln, the narrative still remains mostly balanced and allows for a reading of the history that is different from the conclusions drawn by many historians. This work contains several notable quotations from Jessie's writings, or the writings of outside observers, on the nature of the relationship between Lincoln and Frémont, which should prove extremely useful.

Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1995.

Cited by many recent Lincoln historians, Donald's work is a masterful biography of Lincoln. The work contains an in-depth look at the military history of the Civil War, and shows Lincoln's difficulties in navigating many of the Union generals, including Frémont. The section on Frémont tells much of the same story as other works, but also goes into detail with both Northern and Southern reactions to the proclamation and Lincoln's ability to respond to criticism of his repeal of the proclamation. This work also discusses the challenges to Lincoln for his re-nomination in 1864, including the reemergence of Frémont and the forced resignation of Blair. While Donald cites mainly primary sources, with an emphasis on Lincoln's collected works, he offers a thorough explanation of the sources he referenced in his notes with suggestions for further reading.

Etulain, Richard, ed. *Lincoln Looks West: From the Mississippi to the Pacific*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010.

This edited collection of essays offers great insight into Abraham Lincoln's relationship with the Western states and territories, particularly through his patronage. It will be of great assistance in reconciling Lincoln's clearly politically motivated appointment of Frémont with several of the other politically based appointments he was also making at the time. While the individual essays offer good information about their various subtopics, Etulain's extensive introduction provides a nice overview of Lincoln's Western policies. The sources cited by the various authors are largely secondary analyses of Lincoln and his connections to the various Western theaters.

Foner, Eric. *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.

Unafraid to both praise and criticize Lincoln, Eric Foner thoroughly examines Lincoln's complex, and often changing, relationship with slavery throughout his career. Lincoln slowly transformed from supporting colonization to endorsing complete emancipation, without ever truly embracing Radical Republican abolitionism and

alienating the all-important border states. Foner traces this long and winding development and gets into Lincoln's views on race. There is some discussion of Frémont's emancipation and public reaction to it. Foner also focuses on the actions of other Union generals in regards to fugitive slave proclamations. It is worth noting that these sorts of proclamations remained in place, unlike Frémont's. Foner cites largely secondary sources, but does include primary source Congressional records and conversations between those who influenced Lincoln's views on slavery.

Gerhardt, Michael. *Lincoln's Mentors: The Education of a Leader*. New York: HarperCollins, 2021.

This very recent work on Lincoln scholarship seeks a new approach, namely looking at those who influenced Abraham Lincoln's learning and decision-making. While it takes a new approach, it remains at heart a biography, especially in the later sections after discussing the initial mentors. One of the mentors discussed is Orville Browning, whose correspondence with Lincoln in the wake of Frémont's proclamation is invaluable in teasing out Lincoln's thoughts on Frémont and his potential dismissal of him. Correspondence is at the heart of Gerhardt's citations, as he makes extensive note of conversations between people who were involved in Abraham Lincoln's life or who knew him. This work also contains a good amount of information on Blair's dismissal from Lincoln's cabinet.

Gerteis, Louis S. *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012.

This is an important work for understanding the background to the Civil War in Missouri. Gerteis attempts to illustrate the significance of the Missouri in the Civil War, claiming that Civil War historiography often overlooks the state. It contains good information about John C. Frémont that supports claims about his tenure as the head of the Department of the West. This work contains a lot of detail about specific battles and troop movements, as it is a military history, but it can also provide context for Frémont's decisions, as well as Lincoln's reactions to them. Gerteis cites many Civil War-era documents, as well as monographs on Missouri in the Civil War and the various figures associated with it. He also cites his own work, *Civil War St. Louis* which could prove beneficial to further research.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Civil War St. Louis*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001.

Like Gerteis' other work, this helps shed light on the political, military, and social situation in Missouri before, during, and after the Civil War. St. Louis is at the forefront of this work, and the narrative revolves around the goings on of that city, but does extend to Missouri and the larger West from time to time. The John C. Frémont saga warrants special attention from Gerteis, with some interesting points of analysis which are unique to this work. Gerteis also deeply analyses the role of the Blair family in Missouri politics, and has some unique takes on the relationship between Frank Blair and Frémont. Gerteis also provides a bibliographic essay that elaborates on the newspaper accounts,

writings and speeches, legal and Congressional documents, and secondary monographs and edited collections that he cites at length.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006.

Goodwin's massive undertaking to chronicle Lincoln's efforts to manage the various personalities and politics of his cabinet provides great insight into his life. While it contains much of the same information about Frémont that other works provide, Goodwin offers unique insights and many new quotations and letters. She also expands the story by discussing the Blair family in full detail. Her chronicling of the Blairs and their familial disputes will be invaluable for research into Frémont's connections with the political powerhouse that was their family. This also contains a discussion of Lincoln's revoking of David Hunter's emancipation proclamation, with obvious comparisons to Frémont's. Goodwin's citations are extremely detailed, but she cites largely from the papers of the Lincoln cabinet, personal writings amongst themselves and Lincoln, and monographs over the Lincoln administration and the Civil War.

Guelzo, Allen C. *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Guelzo's work is an insightful look at the process behind Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and includes a look at earlier proclamations that influenced him, including Frémont's in Missouri. Guelzo makes it clear that he believes Jessie Benton Frémont was the one behind Frémont's presidential run in 1856, which could help frame the argument surrounding her role in the Lincoln-Frémont narrative. This work also discussed the complexities surrounding Frémont's declaration of martial law, and how he introduced it as a method of emancipation, but one that Lincoln ultimately rejected. Through Guelzo's work, it becomes clear that Frémont's proclamation helped pave the way for Lincoln's eventual proclamation.

Harris, William C. *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011.

This work is a great overview of Lincoln's policies in the border states of Kentucky, Maryland, and most relevant to this work, Missouri. Using a multitude of primary sources from correspondence between Lincoln and those who vied for power in the various states to newspaper and Congressional excerpts, Harris adds onto the scholarly work done in the monographs and edited collections that he refers to. While his overall argument is that Lincoln appropriately handled most of the border state crises that presented themselves to him, Harris also looks at the unique challenges Lincoln faced in Missouri, from Frémont to factionalism. Harris sees Frémont as an egoist who lacked the skill necessary to run the Department of the West, and whose removal precipitated a large-scale conflict between radicals and conservatives.

Inskeep, Steve. *Imperfect Union: How Jessie and John Frémont Mapped the West, Invented Celebrity, and Helped Cause the Civil War*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2020.

This is an enlightening work on the Frémont's marriage, and Inskeep manages to tell the story of both John and Jessie Frémont in a succinct way. One of the book's weaknesses, however, is that it ends after the 1856 campaign, with the rest of the Frémont's lives, including the Civil War and their dispute with Lincoln, mentioned only briefly in the epilogue. However, the work covers John's expeditions in detail, as well as Jessie's early forays into politics, which set the stage for her involvement in Lincoln and Frémont's drama. This will be an excellent source for background information about the couple, and the dynamic that their relationship took on, which allowed for Jessie to insert herself into John's affairs with the President.

Kaplan, Fred. *Lincoln and the Abolitionists: John Quincy Adams, Slavery, and the Civil War*. New York: HarperCollins, 2017.

Kaplan examines the differing attitudes towards abolition between Abraham Lincoln and John Quincy Adams, along with notable other abolitionists. The overall conclusion reached is that Lincoln and Adams had vastly different stances towards abolition, with Adams embracing it while Lincoln avoided it. One potential reason for this was that Adams took up the abolitionist mantle later in his political career, and Lincoln recognized it would have damaged his prospects as an upstart politician. Kaplan uses many primary sources, including the writings of Lincoln, Adams, and various abolitionists, but also relies on secondary sources for their analysis of Lincoln the President. Much of Kaplan's argument takes place prior to the Civil War years, but this reading might still help explain Lincoln's avoidance of radical abolitionists like Frémont.

Neely, Mark E., Jr. *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

In Neely's work, he studies Lincoln's approach to civil liberties during the Civil War, correctly noting that he often did not respect them. The most pertinent section of this book for the thesis is Chapter 2, "Missouri and Martial Law" where Neely discusses the need for martial law in Missouri due to high levels of disloyalty, the sometimes-unilateral ways that generals enforced the law and infringed on people's civil liberties, and of course, Frémont's emancipation order and the backlash it took on. Neely tells the traditional story of Frémont and Lincoln, but contends that Frémont's order set a dangerous precedent of creating military commissions used throughout the war to violate people's civil liberties.

Nevins, Allan. *Frémont: Pathmarker of the West*. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1939.

A pivotal work on the life of Frémont, Nevins' book is a comprehensive overview of the rise and fall of this complex man. Consistently cited by later sources in Frémont

studies, this was a groundbreaking work in terms of the scope of study and was the first full-length account to have access to Frémont's manuscripts. Nevins cites these manuscripts most frequently, in addition to the writings of Frémont's wife Jessie, as well as the diaries and manuscripts of other politicians who were involved in Frémont's life. Like Chaffin's later work, Nevins is admirable of many of Frémont's characteristics without taking away his culpability for the mistakes he made. One notable characteristic of this account is that, due to its use of Frémont's manuscripts, the story is told from Frémont's point of view more than many other accounts of the Lincoln-Frémont saga, which will aid in giving perspective to the finer details of the story.

Oakes, James. *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.

In this exceptional book by James Oakes, the reader should ask themselves the question- what was the government's policy towards emancipation and abolition (which Oakes notes are two separate things) before, during, and after the Emancipation Proclamation? Oakes contends that the Republican Party held that freedom should be national and slavery local starting in the 1850s, and that Abraham Lincoln worked to ensure this became government policy during his administration. Oakes looks at the overall concept of military emancipation and analyzes the legitimacy of its use during the Civil War against both the Confederacy and the border states, where Frémont attempted to use military emancipation. Oakes clearly considers Frémont to be inept and casts him in the role of a foil to Lincoln's plans, but does offer a fair analysis of what Frémont's order would have done to the border state situation. Also of note is Oakes' mentioning that the uproar over Kentucky in the wake of Frémont's proclamation is largely overstated.

Oates, Stephen B. *With Malice Toward None: A Biography of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

Oates' work is a fair evaluation of Lincoln's path to the White House, and his successes and failures during presidency. This work discusses in detail the Frémont debacle in the West, including popular reactions to Frémont's proclamation. Oates makes several interesting arguments that are worth further study. One of those arguments is that Lincoln's firing of Frémont did not cause a permanent divide between Lincoln and the Radicals, despite other historians making this claim. He also claims that Blair's removal because of Frémont's dropping out of the 1864 race was what completely won over Radical Republicans to Lincoln. More than any other, Oates cites Lincoln's *Collected Works*, but also relies heavily on correspondence between the various characters he discusses.

Parrish, William E. *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861- 1865*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963.

An excellent overview of the political and military situation in Missouri during the Civil War, Parrish's work dives deeply into the story of Missouri's provisional

government and its connections to the various military commanders of Missouri, including John C. Frémont. Parrish keeps with his theme of the provisional government in telling the story of Frémont's command, emphasizing Frémont's disregard for Governor Gamble and the politicians with whom he was supposed to have been working alongside. Parrish is very sympathetic to the cause of the provisional government throughout his work, but not to the efforts of Frémont. His thoroughly researched sources come from several biographies of the various key players in the Missouri drama, as well as primary sources. Some of the major primary sources consulted are correspondence, the proceedings of the Missouri provisional government, the official records of the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln's papers.

Peterson, Merrill D. *Lincoln in American Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

This is a thorough historiography of Lincoln scholarship from the earliest years after his death to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Peterson traces the historiography from Lincoln's early biographers, with all their biases and hagiography, to more recent scholarly works that have utilized the Lincoln Papers and the *Collected Works* to try to produce a more balanced account. Peterson also traces the idea of Lincoln in society's collective memory throughout his work, not just in the United States but throughout the world. This is an extremely useful source for analyzing the history of academic works on Abraham Lincoln and those who influenced him, and it even contains some snippets about Lincoln's emancipation order and his revoke of Frémont's. Peterson's sources are extensive, but are mainly made up of the biographies that he cites throughout, along with the secondary monographs and collected editions he discusses.

Reynolds, David S. *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times*. New York: Penguin Press, 2020.

A unique biography of Lincoln, Reynolds' work attempts to recast Abraham Lincoln's complexities in the light of the environment he grew up and lived in. Therefore, his citations are extensive and cover topics such as 19<sup>th</sup> century American culture, Lincoln's life, and the cultural impacts of the Civil War. Unlike many biographies, Reynolds devotes significant attention to Lincoln's early years, but this does not take away from his account of military and political history once Lincoln reached the White House. While this work does not delve deeply into the saga of Lincoln and Frémont, it does offer compelling evidence of Frémont's corruption, as well as Lincoln's capacity for tolerance and forgiveness, which he showed by giving Frémont a wide leash in Missouri and reappointing him to command the Shenandoah after his removal.

Robinson, Michael D. *A Union Indivisible: Secession and the Politics of Slavery in the Border South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

This work contains valuable information about the situation in the border states before, during, and after the secession winter of 1860-1861. For this thesis, the most important points of note in Robinson's book are Missouri and Kentucky, although his

treatment of Maryland and Delaware is also very interesting. Robinson accurately describes how tense the atmosphere of the border states was, and does a great job of illustrating just how precarious their loyalty to the Union was. The border states truly could have gone either way, but Robinson presents the viewpoint that they chose to stay in the Union because, interestingly enough, it was more likely than the Confederacy to protect their “peculiar institution” of slavery.

Rolle, Andrew. *John Charles Frémont: Character as Destiny*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Containing a similar analysis to Rolle’s articles, one of which came out after the publication of this book, *John Charles Frémont* is a look at Frémont through a psychoanalytic lens, although it reads like more of a history than anything else. At the end of the work, Rolle offers a psychoanalysis of Frémont’s character, concluding largely that the early loss of his father led to serious trauma that he was unable to cope with as an adult, which became reflected in his dealings with other authority figures, including Abraham Lincoln. In terms of the Civil War narrative, Rolle looks much more at claims of corruption and decadence in Frémont’s removal than at the emancipation edict. Rolle references numerous manuscripts of Frémont and those around him, contemporary newspapers and reminiscences, and many secondary materials on Frémont’s life and major Civil War-era events.

Waugh, John G. *Reelecting Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency*. New York: Crown Books, 1997.

Waugh’s account of the 1864 Presidential election is broad in its scope and successful in its purpose to report the facts of the Republican and Democratic campaigns from 1863-1864. Waugh thoroughly discusses the newspaper editors, politicians, generals, and of course other nominees, who influenced the 1864 election, arguing that Lincoln’s victory remained uncertain, although public hope for the re-nomination and reelection vacillated. Quoting thoroughly from newspapers, memoirs, and the collected works of the various individuals he focuses on, Waugh delivers a stunning account of the complexities of the 1864 campaign, some of which involved John C. Frémont. While Waugh does not explore Frémont’s role in huge amounts of detail, he does mention the overall story, specifically regarding his role in the resignation of Montgomery Blair.

White, Ronald C., Jr. *A. Lincoln: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 2009.

This biography offers a balanced look at Lincoln’s life before and during the presidency. There is significant detail given to the situation in Missouri during the Civil War, which will make it an excellent source of background information. It does deal with Frémont and his removal in ways that many other Lincoln biographies do. However, White presents the relatively new argument that Lincoln blocked Congress’ attempt to replace McClellan with Frémont for control of the Army of the Potomac due to Frémont’s history of command in Missouri. This is an excellent work at Lincoln’s life,

with much of the same information as other biographies, which White cites thoroughly along with primary source correspondence and memoirs.

Williams, T. Harry. *Lincoln and His Generals*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952.

Using many biographies, diaries, autobiographies, and manuscripts, Williams' work is a classic for understanding Lincoln's relationships with his top generals, from McClellan and Grant to Pope and Frémont. It contains valuable information about Frémont's military activities in the Civil War, some of which is original. Williams essentially takes the military history of the Civil War at large and boils it down to the story of Lincoln's interactions with his top generals. While Williams gives significant attention to major names like McClellan, Grant, Halleck, and Meade, he also discusses Frémont in detail, although there is no mention of him after he resigned his military commission, and Williams even omits that detail. This would be a great work to reference for more information about any one of Lincoln's highest-ranking commanders.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Lincoln and the Radicals*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1941.

Williams' work is a seminal piece on Lincoln's relationship to the politically radical Republicans, who Williams refers to as the "Jacobins". Deftly utilizing manuscripts of the various participants in the relationship, notes from the Committee on the Conduct of the War, newspaper reports and a host of articles and books, Williams is able to show the growth of the radical wing of the Republican party, largely in response to ineffective Civil War generals and Lincoln administration policies towards emancipation, from the beginning to the end of the conflict, and even beyond into the Reconstruction years after Lincoln's death. Williams offers a great overview of the Frémont situation in his analysis of the different generals, holding that Radicals supported Frémont throughout his career as a standard bearer of their party in 1856, and due to his emancipation order of 1861.

Work, David. *Lincoln's Political Generals*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

This book is an analysis of eight Republican and eight Democratic generals that Abraham Lincoln appointed in the early years of the Civil War. Rather than being an in-depth analysis of each general, Work's strength is in evaluating the overall effectiveness of political generals versus West Point-trained military commanders. Work argues that political appointees functioned better when given command under a career general, rather than being put in charge of their own department, like Frémont was. Although he gives Lincoln credit for appointing political generals where many historians have not, he does not fully exonerate all of them of incompetence, including Frémont. Although Work takes a softer approach towards Frémont than many other historians, he still considers him to be a failed general. This book also contains an interesting analysis of other military occurrences that happened during the time of the Frémont-Lincoln saga.