



MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.

President's Letter - July 2018

Greetings LCWRT members:

The LCWRT celebrates its nineteenth anniversary in 2019! Our fiscal year is from June 1, 2018 until May 31, 2019 so I am fortunate to be president during a rather auspicious time. Our 503c designation was granted in 2000. We plan to commemorate the former event and will provide details later.

On May 23, before our performance of “My Friend Elizabeth Keckley”, a slate of officers was elected by LCWRT members in attendance.

President:	Michael Sweeney
Vice President:	Sandra Ottley
Treasurer:	Ron Albert
Secretary:	Dave McColloch
Member-at-Large:	Tom McNamara

I am a native Pennsylvanian and moved to SCHH eight years ago from Philadelphia. Because of company transfers, I have lived in Detroit, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. My interest in Civil War history stems from my being born and raised in south central PA. In Carlisle - five miles south of my birthplace - JEB Stuart was involved in a minor skirmish on June 30, 1863, and then departed for Gettysburg which was 15 miles south. When Stuart had arrived in Carlisle, General “Baldy” Smith was occupying that town. In 1864 Gen. McCausland (CSA) demanded \$100,000 in gold or \$500,000 in cash from the inhabitants of Chambersburg – 25 miles west. When he didn't get it, he ordered the town burned.

Please be vocal in letting us know how we can serve you better.

Also, if you wish to volunteer, let us know – I am at 843.707.7275.

Michael Sweeney,
President

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With Thoughts Toward Officers in Love — October 2018

By Caroline Wallace Kennedy, Communications Chairman

In October we will be hosting Candice Shy Cooper who will discuss her award-winning book: *Lincoln's Generals' Wives: Four Women Who Influenced the Civil War — For Better and for Worse (Civil War in the North)*. The book won the 2018 Gold Medal in Nonfiction Sarton Women's Book Awards, 2017 Silver Benjamin Franklin Book Prize in History Independent Book Publishers Assoc. and the 2017 Bronze Medal in History Independent Publisher Book Awards.

Cooper examines the unusual and influential lives of Jessie Frémont, Nelly McClellan, Ellen Sherman, and Julia Grant, the wives of Abraham Lincoln's top generals. They were their husbands' closest confidantes and had great implications on the generals' ambitions and actions on important issues. Most important, the women's attitudes toward and relationships with Lincoln and members of his cabinet had major historical significance.

Her in-depth accounts cover the early lives of four brave American women, as well as their families, their education, their political attitudes, and their personal beliefs. Once shots were fired on Fort Sumter, the women were launched out of their private lives into a wholly different universe, where their dealings with their husbands and their individual opinions of President Lincoln had political and historical consequences. Not only well educated them were from prominent families often with fathers that were admired personalities so being married to a "hero" was not new to them. Reading letters, memoirs — Cooper mapped the women's wartime travels. She explored the various ways these women responded to the particular challenges of being Lincoln's generals' wives.

Jessie Fremont and Nelly McClellan encouraged their husbands to persist in their arrogance and delusion and to reject the advice and friendship of their commander in chief. Ellen Sherman and Julia Grant believed in their husband body and soul but did not hesitate to take issue with their spouses when they believed their actions were wrong or their judgments clouded.

When researching for "Officers in Love," it was nearly impossible to find information about the wives without having to wade through their young, ambitious soldier's careers. For more than 150 years, historians have dissected and analyzed their letters and diaries every which way. Remember the Civil was fought during Victorian times during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 to 1901). The women were usually wealthy socialites, socially conscious, some had lived abroad, and most had classical educations. They dedicated their lives to serve as leaders of progressive social reform and social justice movements.

This month I am featuring a story about Jessie Benton Frémont and in the coming months look forward to articles about Nelly McClellan, Ellen Sherman and Julia Grant. You will be surprised who is best known for standing by her man!

If after reading about Jessie Frémont, you may want to read more about other important women during the Civil War such as Mary Hewitt, Lt. Abner Doubleday's wife, Josephine Shaw, married to Col. Russell Lowell, Elizabeth Custer whom many times followed her husband George Custer in disobedience to order, Kate Phillips Brig. Gen. Alexander McDowell McCook's bride, and Fannie Lawrence Ricketts, the wife of Lt. James Ricketts. These strong women helped build our country.

"Stand by Your Man"

By Tammy Wynette

*Sometimes it's hard to be a woman
Giving all your love to just one man
You'll have bad times, and he'll have good times
Doin' things that you don't understand
But if you love him, you'll forgive him
Even though he's hard to understand
And if you love him, oh be proud of him
'Cause after all he's just a man.
Stand by your man, give him two arms to cling to
And something warm to come to*

*When nights are cold and lonely.
Stand by your man, and show the world you love him
Keep giving all the love you can.
Stand by your man.
Stand by your man, and show the world you love him
Keep giving all the love you can.
Stand by your man.*

* * *

Jessie Benton Frémont

The wife of John C. Frémont

Jessie Benton was the beautiful, spirited daughter of famous expansionist Sen. Thomas Hart Benton* from Missouri Benton, a leading advocate of *Manifest Destiny***, a political movement pushing expansion to the West. She was born at Cherry Grove Plantation near Lexington, Va., the second child of Thomas Hart Benton and Elizabeth Preston McDowell. Her father, Sen. Benton, had been wanting a son, but went ahead and named her in honor of his father, Jesse Benton.

(*Benton served in the Senate from 1821 to 1851, becoming the first member to serve five terms. He was born in Harts Mill, N.C. graduating from the University of North Carolina. He practiced law near Nashville, Tenn. at his plantation Sunnyside, a 40,000-acre estate. He served as an aide to Gen. Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812, after he settled in St. Louis, Mo., after the war. When Missouri became a state in 1821, Benton won election as one of its U.S. Senators. The Democratic-Republican Party fractured after the 1824 and Benton became a Democratic leader in the Senate, serving as an ally of President Jackson and President Martin Van Buren.)

(***Manifest Destiny*, a phrase coined in 1845, expressed the philosophy that drove 19th-century U.S. territorial expansion. *Manifest Destiny* held that the U.S. was destined — by God, its advocate's believed — to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism across the entire North American continent.)

Charles Fremon was a French émigré. (An émigré is someone who moves from their own country to live in another for political reasons. Thousands of Frenchmen like Charles Fremon left France in the 1790s during the French Revolution.) When Charles Fremon and Anne Pryor met in Va., Anne was already married to an old military officer. When Anne's husband found out about their relationship, she and Charles left Va. and moved to Savannah, Ga. where they had their first child, John C. Fremont, on Jan. 21, 1813 creating an enormous scandal since John's birth was mired in controversy for being out of wedlock.

Fremon had two younger siblings, Elizabeth and Frank. The family traveled a lot when he was very young. His sister Elizabeth was born in Nashville, Tenn. and his brother Frank was born in Norfolk, Va. Sadly, Fremon's father died in 1817. After his death, Anne took her three children to Charleston, S.C.

Throughout his life, Fremon had several mentors who helped him become successful. One of these mentors was a lawyer in Charleston named John Mitchell. Fremon did such an excellent job as his clerk that Mitchell said he would pay for his tuition to study at a local preparatory school run by John Robertson. Fremon was about 13 years old when he began his formal schooling. He enjoyed his studies, learning Greek and Latin and read books like *The Odyssey* by Homer in their original language.

While at school, Fremon became very close with John Robertson, the school's owner, and primary

teacher. In 1829, at the age of 16, Frémont entered the College of Charleston as a junior with exceptional scholastic abilities in Greek and Latin. At the College of Charleston, Frémont continued to study the Classics, and he also learned mathematics, science, and astronomy. In 1830, he lost focus on his studies and often skipped school to explore the outdoors. In his *Memoirs*, Fremont explains those early adventures: *“In the summer we ranged about in the woods, or on the now historic islands, gunning or picnicking...”* After skipping one too many days of class, he was expelled from the College of Charleston. However, Fremont did not lose his love of reading and learning just because he was not in a classroom.

He read a work on practical astronomy, published in Dutch. The language made it a closed book but for the beautiful precise maps of the stars and many examples of astronomical calculations. John said, *“By its aid, I became well acquainted with the night skies and familiarized myself with the observations necessary to determine latitude and longitude. This was the beginning of the astronomical knowledge afterward so essential to me.”*

In this quote from his *Memoirs*, Fremont talked about two books that changed his life. *“The accidents that lead to events are often hardly noticeable. A single book sometimes enters fruitfully into character or pursuit. I had two such. One was a chronicle of men who had made themselves famous by brave and noble deeds, or infamous by cruel and base acts. With a schoolboy’s enthusiasm, I read these stories over and over again, with alternate pleasure or indignation. I please myself in thinking they have sometimes exercised a restraining or inspiring influence. Dwelling in the memory, they were like the ring of Amasis.”*

Around the time he was expelled from the College of Charleston, the U.S. Topographical Corps commissioned 2nd Lt. John Fremont in 1838, a skilled leader, navigator, cartographer, and wilderness survivalist. At age 22, Frémont got a job as a mathematics teacher aboard the USS *Natchez* as a teacher in the early 1830s sailing to South America. (The U.S. Navy did not have the same methods for training their sailors as they do today, and it was his job to teach the sailors how to navigate on open waters successfully.) This was Fremont’s only adventure by sea; he would soon start his career as an explorer by land.

Another critical mentor came into his life, Joel Robert Poinsett, the Secretary of War, from Charleston, S.C. Poinsett was a well-known physician, diplomat, and politician. He helped shape Fremont’s opinions on politics and gave him important career opportunities. Poinsett disliked slavery, had a love of the Union, and a wish to see the U.S. expand its territory in the west. Soon Fremont came to share these same. John Fremont was so unusually talented that Poinsett recommended his services to famous French explorer, Jean-Nicolas Nicollet,* when the latter was about to survey of the Upper Mississippi. (John Frémont used to spell his name *Fremont* until his mentor Joseph N. Nicollet, encouraged Fremont to embrace his French ancestry. Later in his life, he added the accented ‘e’ and the ‘t’ on to his name. Immigrants often changed the spelling or pronunciation of their name when they came to America. Many immigrants thought it would help them fit in better or find a good job.)

(*Nicollet was appointed to head the Corps of Topographical Engineers and lead a War Department-funded expedition to map the area between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. This was to correct the Western maps affected by Pike’s* mistake. The expedition party set out on June 18, 1838, from Traverse des Sioux on the Second Expedition. The party was composed of Frémont, to assist on the expedition instead of a military escort, Joseph Renville Jr., and Joseph LaFromboise, an agent for the American Fur Company who was a half French, half Native American. On July 4, 1838, the expedition arrived at Pipestone Quarry, where the party members carved their initials on a rock. From there, the party proceeded along the Minnesota and Blue Earth Rivers toward Spirit Lake, Iowa.)

(*American explorer Zebulon Pike named the mountain "Highest Peak" in 1806, and the mountain was

later commonly known as "Pike's Highest Peak." American explorer Stephen Harriman Long named the mountain "James Peak" in honor of Edwin James who climbed to the summit in 1820. The mountain was later renamed "Pike's Peak.")

In a quote from his *Memoirs*, Frémont talks about the important role of mentors in his life. *"Throughout, at different periods it has been my good fortune to be in familiar relations with men who were imminent, each in his own line, all of whom were individualized by character and some distinguished by achievement. Even if insensibly, such associations influence the course of life and give its coloring to it. The early part of mine was desultory. The path that men are destined to walk had not been marked out for me. Later events determined this, and meantime I had freedom of choice in preparatory studies."*

Jessie was a favorite of President Andrew Jackson. She was a raven-haired beauty famous from childhood. Raised in Washington, D.C., more in the manner of a 19th-century son than a daughter, she was always by her father's side. Her father was renowned as the "*Great Expansionist*." He saw to her early education and introduced her to the famous politicians of the day, an unusual thing for the times. The White House was familiar to her, for, during Jackson's administration, she used to go there with her father. The old President was a lover of children. He liked to run his fingers through her soft curls, while he talked with his friend Benton, unwittingly giving the curls many a twist as he stressed his subject. She was praised by her father for allowing Jackson his moment of pleasure although often he tugged her curls too tightly.

Her father shared with her the many books and maps in the briefcase that always accompanied him on their trips to and from Missouri and Virginia. Under his instruction, she became versed in social structure, politics, history, literature and languages, unusual subjects for young ladies of the time. She spent time in the Library of Congress when he worked in the Senate.

She began, to share her father's dream of a nation stretching from ocean to ocean. In this unusual manner, she became educated in social structure and politics, history, literature, and languages. After attaining some fluency in French and Spanish, she helped in the translation of government documents. Occasionally she translated secret Spanish documents for the State Department.) In 1838, the Benton's decided that their rambunctious younger daughter needed the discipline of a fashionable girl's school. She was enrolled at Miss English's Female Seminary in Washington. She despised the school, mostly because of the class discrimination she observed with the help.

In 1840 at age 16, while studying and living at the Seminary, the vivacious belle met Lt. John C. Frémont a young topographical engineer who was in Washington while working at the mapping wing of the U.S. Army. By the time she met Frémont, nearly 12 years her senior, she had already received two marriage proposals, including one from President Martin Van Buren. In an ironic twist of fate, it was Benton himself who introduced John Frémont to his daughter.

Jessie's spent time at the mapping wing because of John's interest in Western expansion. Frémont was preparing a report on his exploration he had made between the Missouri River and the Northern frontier of the U.S. Later, Frémont escorted Jessie's older sister, Liz, to a school concert where he saw Jessie and fell in love at first sight.

She said, *"He is the handsomest young man whoever walked the streets of Washington."*

He later wrote, *"The effect that a rose of rare color or a beautiful picture would have done."* She was in the first bloom of young beauty. *"Her beauty,"* he wrote later, in describing that first impression of her, *"had come far enough down from English ancestry to be now in her that American kind which is made up largely of mind expressed in the face, but it still showed its Saxon descent. At that time of awakening mind, the qualities that made hers could only be seen in flitting shadows across the face or in the expression of incipient thought or unused and untried feeling."*

Coming home for the Easter holidays, she found Frémont had become identified with her father's "Oregon work." He was a daily visitor at her home, and in his constant meetings with her, he found confirmation of the first impression he had formed of her. "*There are features,*" he wrote later, "*that conveys to us a soul so white that they impress with instant pleasure, and of this kind were hers. Her qualities were all womanly, and education had curiously preserved the down of a modesty which was innate. There had been no experience of life to brush away the bloom.*" Before the holidays were over this impression of her had penetrated Frémont's entire being. He loved her no less profoundly than he admired her. "*Insensibly and imperceptibly,*" he said, "*there came a glow into my heart which changed the current and color of daily life, and gave a beauty to common things.*"

Love bloomed. When her parents noticed Jesse's interest, they forbade her to see Frémont. Before the holidays were over this impression of her had penetrated Frémont's entire being, and he loved her no less profoundly than he admired her, rendering her an absolute devotion that knew no subsequent diminution. "*Insensibly and imperceptibly,*" he said, "*there came a glow into my heart which changed the current and color of daily life, and gave a beauty to common things.*"

In the autumn both Frémont and Jesse Benton were back in Washington, and on Oct. 19, 1841, she was courageous enough, in defiance of both father and mother, whom she not only loved but indeed revered, to become his wife. Though her life has been one of much exposure, she had at all times been sheltered. Her love for John was not only a passionate impulse but a political statement. It was partly due to the conditions of John's birth and his unorthodox upbringing that the Bentons considered him beneath their daughter's social station and an unsuitable husband.

Sen. Benton was persuaded by his ailing wife to accept the marriage. He asked the couple to move into their house. The newlyweds would become a political power couple and influence the country in beneficial ways.

The year after their marriage, Frémont applied to the Secretary of War to explore the far West, penetrate the Rockies, and survey and examine the South Pass, along the route that would become the Oregon Trail. The plan was supported by Benton, who thought by making surveys the government would be giving a semblance of protection to its Western possessions. Congress gave its sanction. Benton began using his considerable influence to further his son-in-law's career as an explorer.

Frémont left pregnant Jessie in the spring of 1842, leading his expedition. Gathered on the Missouri frontier, in May 1842, with a handful of adventuresome men, Frémont left to explore the Southern pass, and the Wind River country of Wyoming, the first of similar expeditions. His scientific reports of which going into astronomy, botany, mineralogy, geology, and geography were translated into many tongues and gave him worldwide fame.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition had explored a portion of the vast interior of North America by 1806. There was much-unexplored land between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. A strong feeling existed among many Americans that all that land should be part of the U.S., although much of it belonged to Mexico. Some people were already considering a move to the West, even though so little was known. The U.S. Government began a series of surveys looking for possible routes, inventory resources, and keep a presence in the Louisiana Purchase land, some still owned by Mexico. Congress ordered thousands of printed copies of Frémont's reports. His expeditions continued, taking him through thousands of miles of wilderness.

John Frémont led five expeditions from 1842 to 1854. His reports and maps helped many pioneers travel into the territory.

(The Oregon Trail was a 2,000-mile route from Independence, Mo., to Oregon City, Ore., which was used by hundreds of thousands of pioneers in the mid-1800s to emigrate West. The trail snaked through

Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and finally into Oregon. Without the Oregon Trail and the passing of the Oregon Land Act in 1850, which encouraged settlement in the Oregon Territory, American pioneers would have been slower to settle the American West.)

During Frémont's absences, which were always of uncertain duration, Jessie remained in her parents' home. When she had been married about a year, her father sent for her one morning, and, pointing to her old place at his library table, and said, "*I want you to resume your place there; you are too young to fritter away your life without some useful pursuit.*" So she dropped back naturally into her old habits of study as if her honeymoon days had been but another form of vacation.

Frémont returned days before the birth of Elizabeth Benton (known as Lily) on Nov. 15, 1842. Jessie, interested in the expedition, became his recorder, making notes as he described his experiences and then writing them out. Frémont became known as the "*Pathfinder to the West*," after James Fenimore Cooper's novel, the *Pathfinder*. Jessie, interested in the details of his expedition, became his recorder, making notes as he described his experiences. She wrote and edited best-selling stories of the adventures Frémont had while exploring the West with his scout, Kit Carson*, adding human interest touches. Thus, she involved herself in her happiest life's work, interpreting her husband adventures for a public eager for information about the wild, wild West.

In May, of 1843, the first of 1,000 pioneers leaves Missouri on the Oregon Trail. In the summer of 1843, while Frémont was still on the frontier gathering men and animals for his second expedition, his recall to Washington was ordered by the commander of the U.S. Army's Bureau of Topographical Engineers. The order, never reached him, for he had already departed St. Louis, but it fell into the hands of his wife. Though she was depressed at their recent parting, she sent him a messenger, bidding him to hurry to catch up with John. Not able to reach her husband, she decided it was a scheme by opposing forces in government to prevent the expedition. She acted to shield the mission and thus her husband's career, making an executive decision based on her political convictions.

The second expedition was printed as a Senate document in an edition of 10,000 copies and widely sold in a commercial version as well.

Sen. Benton pushed for compromise in the area of Oregon with the British and supported the 1846 Oregon Treaty, which divided the territory along the 49th parallel. He also authored the first Homestead Act, which granted land to settlers willing to farm it. Many Eastern and Midwestern farmers and city dwellers were dissatisfied with their lives and began moving up the Oregon Trail to the Willamette Valley. This free land was widely publicized.

In Oct 1848, Frémont and Kit Carson embarked on a 14-month exploration of the Snake and Columbia River Valleys taking 35 men for five months exploring the land between Missouri and the Rocky Mountains.

(*Enshrined in popular mythology even in his lifetime, Kit Carson was a trapper, scout, Indian agent, soldier and authentic legend of the West. Carson's notoriety grew as his name became associated with critical events in the United States' Westward expansion. He was still with Frémont when he joined California's Bear-Flag rebellion before the outbreak of the Mexican-American War in 1846.)

Frémont was required to report his findings to Congress but suffered writers' block. As Jesse later recalled, "*the horseback life, the sleep in the open air*" made him "*unfit for the indoor life of writing.*" She offered to write as he dictated to her, and the report with its descriptions of the Western lands was a success. Succeeding expedition reports made Frémont and Kit Carson famous. People heading West for gold bought copies of the articles with their supplies. Historians are mixed on who was the actual writer. One, editor, indicated that Frémont was one of those writers who "*acquired by marriage a very*

attractive literary style."

Frémont led five expeditions between 1842 and 1853, surveying and mapping routes between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers what is now the Midwest and onto the Oregon Trail territories to the Willamette Valley and crossed the Sierra Madres into the Sacramento Valley of California.

He is commonly given credit for naming what became a Midwestern state. In his expedition reports to the Secretary of War, he listed the most prominent river in that area by its Native American name, "*Nebraska*." Later, the Secretary used that name to the entire territory. (The Oregon Trail is today what is Nevada and California.)

Often Jessie traveled with Frémont, or she would go as far as St. Louis, waiting there for his return, or going out again to meet him later. He was once eight months overdue, during which time of worry and suspense she had a dinner table set for him every night. He came in the dead of night, and, rather than disturb the household, he checked into a hotel and slept in a bed for the first time in 18 months.

With whatever misgivings she may have seen for him or that he would encounter undoubtedly many dangers, and possibly even death, she never, even when the opportunity came. A weaker woman would have availed herself or endeavored to hold him back from his purpose. He would often, after covering many miles of his route, would ride back to her for another goodbye, overtaking his party again by hard riding or pressing forward while they rested.

Frémont rallied the settlers to stand against Mexican rule in **1845** in California. This resistance was the beginning of an independent California Republic to overthrow Mexican control in the "*Bear Flag Revolution*" (June – July 1846). With several dozen well-armed men he helped to defeat Mexican rule in 1846, by collaborating with Americans. The rebellious settlers gathered on June 14, 1846, in the plaza of Sonoma, Calif. and forced the Mexican Col. Vallejo to surrender. To celebrate their bloodless victory, the rebels raised a flag bearing their emblem: a brown bear on a white field, a red stripe along the bottom and a red star in the upper corner, emblazoned with the words "*California Republic*."

Frémont found himself caught between conflicting orders of feuding Army Gen. Stephen Kearny and Navy Commodore Robert Stockton. He declared himself military governor and was subsequently arrested and court-martialed. Frémont sided with Stockton. (In 1846 approximately 500 Americans were living in California, compared with between 8,000 and 12,000 Mexicans.)

In a strange twist of fate, Frémont asked American Consul to the Territory of California, Thomas O. Larkin to purchase land for him in the San José area before he left for his trial. Larkin instead bought land in Rancho Las Mariposas, where a few years later gold was discovered, making the Frémont very rich. (On Feb. 10, 1847, Frémont purchased 70 square miles of land in the Sierra foothills, called Las Mariposas, through land speculator Thomas O. Larkin, for \$3,000. Las Mariposas had been owned by former California governor, Juan Bautista Alvarado, and his wife, Martina Caston de Alvarado. Frémont had hoped Las Mariposas was near San Francisco or Monterey. He was disappointed when he discovered it was farther inland by Yosemite, on the Miwok Indian's hunting grounds. To Frémont it was barren land, more than 100 miles from the nearest settlement, and had no farms or ranch lands and was inhabited by hostile Indians. Frémont demanded the ranch near the Mission San José or his money back. Larkin did not act, and from 1847 to 1848 Frémont was in Washington defending himself at a court-martial. (The Miwok tribes were a California tribe of Native American Indians who were hunter-gathers and fishers. They lived in North-central California, from the Pacific coast to the West slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.)

When Frémont returned to California, he learned of the 1848 gold discovery at Coloma. Shortly after that, he discovered gold in the Rancho Las Mariposas region. With the California Gold Rush, Frémont unwanted tract of land turned out to be the richest in California. Before Frémont could legally

establish his grant boundaries, thousands of forty-niners arrived on the scene. Few of the miners acknowledged Frémont's claim and a legal battle began during the Mexican-American War. These cases were settled by the U.S. Supreme Court allowing Frémont to be declared the sole owner that would take until 1856 to decide and 1859 to finalize. (An estimated 55,000 people arrived by overland routes and another 24,000 by sea. Transportation from the mines to the Sacramento River became important. Freight wagons and stagecoaches provided transportation to the mining camps over the often rugged roads.)

Jessie gave birth to a second child, Benton, on **July 24, 1848**, whose death as an infant she blamed on Gen. Kearney, Frémont's accuser. When he lost his trial, he resigned from the Army and headed West on another expedition just as the discovery of gold was announced. Though he was reinstated by the President after the Bear Flag Revolution, Frémont returned his commission.

Discovery of gold in 1848 focused world attention on California and the Pacific Coast region. The arduous overland journey across the plains by oxen or mules, and the long ocean voyage via Panama or around Cape Horn, brought to the early settlers a realization of their isolation from the remainder of the country. A growing sentiment in the West and East favored a railroad that would bind the nation closer together.

A fourth expedition commenced in 1848 when Frémont secured private funding and ended in finding a passage to California from the East along the headwaters of the Rio Grande River. Intent on restoring his honor and explorer reputation after his court-martial. Frémont and Sen. Benton devised a plan to support their vision of *Manifest Destiny*. With an interest in the potential of railroads, Sen. Benton sought support from the Senate for a railroad to connect St. Louis to San Francisco along the 38th parallel, the latitude which both cities approximately share. Frémont embarked with 35 men up the Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas rivers to explore the terrain. The artists and brothers' Edward Kern and Richard Kern, and their brother Benjamin Kern were part of the expedition. However, Frémont was unable to obtain the valued service of Kit Carson as a guide. This was later followed by the Southern Pacific Railroad.

His mountaineers were ready to follow wherever he should lead. He had faith in himself and his purpose that evoked confidence in them. When it became necessary at times to divide the party, those who were not with him suffered sorely. The great winter of 1848, was a hardship for all, traveling days and weeks in continuing snows. He wrote to Jessie during a brief respite from that painful period, when his men were starving, freezing and wandering off in despair to lie down alone and die. *"We shall yet enjoy quiet and happiness together; these are nearly one and the same to me now. I make frequent pleasant pictures of the happy home we are to have, and oftenness and among the pleasantness of all I see our library with its bright fire in the rainy, stormy days, and the large windows looking out upon the sea in the bright weather. I have it all planned in my mind."*

(The Mexican-American War (1846 — 1848) marked the first U.S. armed conflict chiefly fought on foreign soil. It pitted a politically divided and militarily unprepared Mexico against the expansionist-minded administration of U.S. President James K. Polk, who believed the U.S. had a "*manifest destiny*" to spread across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. A border skirmish along the Rio Grande started off the fighting and was followed by a series of U.S. victories. When the dust cleared, Mexico had lost about one-third of its territory, including nearly all of present-day California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico.)

In 1849, Jessie and Elizabeth (Lily) made a treacherous journey aboard a ship to join Frémont in

California. This was something very few women did even fewer with only a six-year-old child, her daughter Lily, as a companion. After disembarking and crossing the Isthmus of Panama, she was stricken with a fever, and ill for many weeks. She was surrounded with a warmth of friendship and sympathy from strangers which she seemed to attract. There were many evidences of genuine interest in her recovery, with one resident of the city vowing to supply the hospital with limes for a year. When better she and Lily boarded another vessel to San Francisco.

Frémont tended his business at the mines in Mariposa and purchased property in Monterey, Bear Valley, and San Francisco at periods between 1849 and 1861. Flush with income from their gold mines at Rancho Las Mariposas, the Frémonts established a home and settled into San Francisco society. Jessie, involved her herself in her husband's political career, and pursued her political ambitions, shocking some, impressing others, but ultimately creating a reputation as a states woman. In San Francisco, she got involved in city politics and discussions with the men on the crucial issues of the times until war became imminent and they moved to St. Louis. Her great intellectual powers were impressive.

In 1850 John Frémont became one of the first two Senators from California. He served as a Democratic Senator from the new state of California from Sept. 9, 1850, to Mar. 3, 1851. Elected on Dec. 20, 1849, he tore himself away from his idolizing followers and rode out into the darkness and storm to tell his wife, 70 miles away, that he had been elected to the U.S. Senate. Though it was late in the night when he reached Monterey, he left again before dawn and on his way back to San José, making in all a ride of 140 forty miles.

A steamer sailed from San Francisco carrying, Frémont, and William McKendree Gwin originally from Tennessee, and their families. (Gwin purchased property in Paloma, Calif. where a gold mine was established. The Gwin Mine would eventually yield millions of dollars, providing him with a fortune. He also organized the Chivalry wing of the Democratic Party.) At Mazatlan, Mexico a British man-of-war fired a salute in honor of the two distinguished passengers.

They landed in New York at the last of March. Mrs. Frémont was dressed in a riding habit that had been shortened to a walking length, black satin slippers, a leghorn hat tied down with a China crepe scarf, and a Scotch plaid shawl she'd wore while living in California. (A leghorn hat has a wide brim trimmed with folds of white muslin, wide pink taffeta ribbon and bows and streamers, and artificial pink roses.)

Jessie gave birth to their third child, John C. Frémont, Jr. on April 19, 1851, at Rancho Las Mariposas, Calif. She was a great supporter of her husband, outspoken on political issues and a determined opponent of slavery, which was excluded from the formation of California. She wrote a letter to Lydia Maria Child, writer and abolitionist and credited her antislavery stance to her mother and claimed: "*I would as soon place my children in the midst of smallpox, as rear them under the influence of slavery.*" She maintained a high level of political involvement during a period that was unfavorable for women. Jessie proved herself to be years ahead of her time. They lived there until the Civil War at which time Frémont was named Maj. Gen. in command at St. Louis. In her event-filled life, some of her happiest times were at her house at Black Point, now known as Fort Mason. The property included three sides of the point, and Jesse described it "*like being on the bow of a ship.*" Alcatraz was so close that Jesse is said to have called the lighthouse on the island her nightlight. (Frémont gave the strait between Marin County and San Francisco County — entrance to the San Francisco Bay the name "Golden Gate" in his *Geographic Memoir*. In 1933, the name was later given to the famous Golden Gate Bridge which crosses the Golden Gate Reservoir.)

Their house on 13 acres was on the point. Jesse remodeled the house inside and out adding roses,

fuchsias, and walkways. Their home became a salon for San Francisco intellectuals. She invited literary celebrities when they came to town including Herman Melville, who was trying to get over the failure of *Moby Dick*. Conversations in her salon led to early conservation efforts when Jesse and a group lobbied Congress and President Lincoln to preserve Yosemite and Mariposa Big Trees. Jesse's husband, however, often away on business ventures, was not a regular at her gatherings.

PRESENTED IN COURT

As a scientist and explorer, Frémont's reputation had gone forth to the countries of, from many of which he received enviable honors and decorations. In late Feb. 1852 the Frémonts with their baby, Charley, sailed for Southhampton via Havana on the Cunard sidewheeler *Africa*.

Kitty Lawrence, daughter of the American Ambassador, organized Jessie's social engagements. To the British eyes that looked upon her, she was a graceful, distinguished woman, sharing in the renown of her husband, the American explorer, and a recent medallist of the Royal Geographical Society, whose honors are only conferred upon those whose expeditions are taken out at personal cost and sacrifice. In the faultless details of her court dress, she was a gratification to the most critical taste. It's exquisite design of faint pink moire the color of the outer edge of a rose petal to the deeper tone it assumes near the heart, with clusters of the roses. She said, "*My spirit felt at home with my English ancestry.*" (Jessie's great-grandfather was Samuel Benton from Worcester, England.)

John and Jessie were presented not only at the court of England, but France, and Denmark attending at Copenhagen the wedding festivities of the Crown Prince Frederick VII and his Swedish bride Louisa Christina Rasmussen at Frederiksborg Palace. As one of her friends has cleverly said of Mrs. Frémont, "*she has entertained and been entertained through not only the gamut but the chromatic scale of society.*"

On a morning in early spring, Jessie stood in the throne-room of Queen Victoria at St. James Palace across from Buckingham Palace. Buckingham Palace, awaiting her presentation to the Queen.

In April they relocated to Paris. While the couple was visiting France, their fourth child, Anne Beverly Frémont, was born in Paris on Feb. 1, 1853.

Frémont outfitted his fifth and final expedition in 1853, designed to perfect the results of the fourth, by laying out the best route for a national highway from the Mississippi River Valley to the Pacific Ocean. He was also looking for a viable way for a transcontinental railroad along the 38th parallel, and a year-round land route to California. (Landmarks on the 37th parallel include Santa Cruz, Gilroy, Madera, and Ubehebe Crater in Death Valley, Calif., Colorado City, Ariz., the Four Corners at the intersection with the 32nd meridian from Washington (the only place where four U.S. states meet at a point); Cairo, Ill.) The Army Topographical Corps' Expedition journeyed between Missouri and San Francisco, over a combination of known trails and unexplored terrain. They passed through the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada Mountains during the winter to document the amount of snow and the possibility of winter rail passage along the route.

The explorers followed the Santa Fe Trail, passing Bent's Fort before heading West and entering the San Luis Valley of Colorado in December. (From 1833 to 1849, the Fort was a way stop along the Santa Fe Trail. It was the *only* permanent settlement not under the jurisdiction and control of Native Americans or Mexicans. The U.S. Army, explorers, and other travelers stopped at the Fort to replenish supplies, such as water and food, and perform maintenance on their equipment. Kit Carson was employed as a hunter by the Bent* brothers in 1841, and regularly visited the Fort. Also, Frémont used the Fort as a staging area and replenishment junction, for his expeditions.)

(*William Wells Bent and his brothers, Charles, George, and Robert were frontiersmen, traders, ranchers, and explorers with forts in Colorado. He also acted as a mediator to the Cheyenne Nation,

other Native American tribes with the U.S. With his brothers; Bent established a trade business along the Santa Fe Trail. By the Arkansas River in present-day Colorado, in the early 1830s; the Bents constructed a fort made of adobe, called Bent's Fort, Along the Santa Fe trail, furs, horses, and other goods were traded for food and household goods by travelers, fur-trappers, and local Mexican and Native American people. William Bent negotiated peace among the Plains tribes on either side of the Arkansas River, as well as between the Native American and the U.S. government.)

Frémont followed the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail, crossing the Continental Divide at Cochetopa Pass, continuing West into central Utah. But following the trail was made difficult by snow cover. (Cochetopa Pass is a mountain pass in the Rocky Mountains of South-central Colorado. It lies on the Continental Divide between the city of Gunnison to the Northwest and the town of Saguache to the Southeast. Its name is taken from the Cochetopa Hills that it lies within, Cochetopa being the Ute Indian word for "*pass of the buffalo.*") Weeks of snow and bitter cold took its toll making their progress slow. Nonessential equipment was abandoned, and a man died before the party reached the Mormon settlement of Parowan in Southwestern Utah on Feb. 8, 1854. After spending two weeks in Parowan to regain strength, they continued across the Great Basin entering the Owens Valley near present-day Big Pine, Calif. (The area around Big Pine, and Owens Valley, was once a green, fertile farming region.) Frémont then turned South and crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains and entered the Kern River drainage, which was followed West to the San Joaquin Valley. (Parowan has been called the "*Mother Town of the Southwest*" because of the many pioneers who left from there to start other communities in Southern Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, and even Oregon and Wyoming.)

He arrived in San Francisco on April 16, 1854, having completed a winter passage across the mountains. He was optimistic that a railroad along the 38th Parallel was possible and that winter travel along the line would be possible through the mountains. (The expedition witnesses an eruption of Mt. St. Helens.)

These expeditions involved great hardships, but his men were rewarded by marvelous disclosures of the geographical variety and wealth of the country since Kansas, and the regions to the West were almost unknown up to this time. His report of the resources found attracted the attention of the people of the East. After these explorations, a rapid influx of immigrants flooded into Kansas and enabled the speedy settlement of the territory. Traversing the state from its Eastern to its Western boundary, Frémont's reports turned the tide of home-seekers in that direction.

Anne died five months later, on July 11, in Washington, D.C., where their fifth and final child, Francis Preston Frémont, was born on May 17, 1855.

JAMES BUCHANAN VS. JOHN FREMONT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

For the presidential election of 1856, the Democrats nominated James Buchanan and John Breckenridge. The newly formed Republican party nominated John Frémont, and William Drayton, with the American Know-Nothing party, nominated former President Millard Fillmore and Andrew Donelson, and the Abolition Party chose Gerrit Smith and Samuel McFarland. (Frémont was an opponent of slavery and its Westward expansion, which put him at odds with members of the Democratic party. When the new Republican Party was born in the 1860s in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the expansion of slavery, he was a perfect fit.)

“OUR JESSIE!”

Frémont's explorer and war hero fame, along with his credentials as a committed antislavery advocate,

put him in position to become the first Republican candidate. Jessie came into her own. She played an extremely active role in the campaign, rallying support for her husband.

She protected her husband from the opposition's attacks and garnered public support. During the campaign newspapers observed, "*Beautiful, graceful, intellectual and enthusiastic, she will make more proselytes (converts) to the Rocky Mountain platform in 15 minutes, than 50 stump orators can win over in a month.*" Calls for "*Our Jessie,*" "*Let us see Jessie,*" and "*We want both the Col. And his Jessie,*" permeated through the crowds that followed the Frémonts along the campaign trail.

Jessie's involvement in the campaign demonstrated her abilities as a stateswoman and led supporters to call for her placement in the White House. *The Boston Daily Atlas* claimed, "*If the gallantry of the country demanded a Queen at the head of the nation, the lovely lady of the Republican nominee would command the universal suffrage of the people. She is a woman as eminently fitted to adorn the White House, as she has proved herself worthy to be a hero's bride.*" Jessie embodied the qualities that the public associated with politicians.

One particular campaign slogan read, "*Frémont and Jessie too.*" Her father, however, a lifelong Democrat, refused to endorse her husband's bid for the presidency. Their campaign song included the platform: "*Free Speech, Free Press, Free Soil and Frémont,*" but its chorus was "*We'll give 'em Jessie.*" This did not stop the Frémont supporters from continuing to refer to her as the "*first lady in the land,*" a title used throughout her life.

Although he lost to Democrat James Buchanan, scoring a very respectable 114 electoral votes to Buchanan's 174, Frémont retained an excellent reputation based on his pioneering exploits. Frémont garnered many Northern votes surpassing the American Party candidate, Millard Fillmore. He did carry the state of California. If he had taken the state of Pennsylvania, he would have won.

Gen. Frémont and his family departed for Arizona via the new railroad in 1858. At the Palace Saloon and Hotel, the people of the Pacific Coast welcomed them. They congratulated Arizona on its new Governor, feeling assured that during his administration its best interest would be most zealously guarded. (The Civil War played a huge role in defining what the country's railroad map would look like. People thought only one line across the country would be necessary with the snow-free Southern route promising. Once the war began, the Union government did not want a Southern route and instead chose a Western route from Omaha to Oakland, Calif. When the Civil War ended the Union Pacific Railroad headed West in 1865.)

The journey West — 2,400 miles and 4 - 8 months — was reduced to a mere week or two following the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. The nation was connected like it never had before. The impact was immediate!

JOHN C. FREMONT AND MISSOURI EMANCIPATION ORDINANCE OF MISSOURI

When the Civil War began, President Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. Frémont and Commander of the Department of the West, based in St. Louis. Missourians' loyalties were split, as inhabitants of a slave state that stayed in the Union. Guerilla warfare was rampant. There was open recruitment by the Confederates, mismanagement, and limited supplies and troops. Frémont got to work pushing the rebels back while "*General Jessie*" ran headquarters trying to get him the supplies he needed. They shared the belief that St. Louis was unprepared for war and begged Washington for more supplies and troops. She threw herself into the war effort, helping to organize a Soldier's Relief Society, becoming active in the Western Sanitary Commission, which provided medicine and nursing to men injured in the war.

Soon Frémont's leadership came into question, with cries of corruption and mismanagement, and

Jessie's involvement came under scrutiny. Frémont's opponents attributed his inability to run his department to her talent and energy efficiently. Jessie did not let these criticisms stop her from following her political agenda. On **Aug. 31, 1861**, after only consulting his wife and the Quaker abolitionist Edward M. Davis, Gen. Fremont without Lincoln's authorization, issued a proclamation declaring martial law in Missouri. Jessie was placed in the middle of a vast scandal.

A NOT-SO-GREAT MAJOR GENERAL

However great Frémont may have been as an explorer, it was clear he was in over his head as a general. Under his leadership, the Department of the West was in shambles, a hotbed of corruption, though he was never personally implicated. He proved ineffective as a military leader, failing to rid Missouri of Confederate forces. Also, he implemented public policies in his department that gained him powerful enemies both in Missouri and in Washington. Perhaps worst of all, he seemed stubbornly blind to the political realities with which President Lincoln had to contend.

At the beginning of the Civil War, emancipation was not popular with Union Army officers. *"The few officers who did support emancipation were clearly animated by politics,"* wrote historian Mark Grimsley. *"Politically Frémont was associated with the faction of the Republican party known as the radicals, who wanted to make the abolition of slavery one of the official objectives of the war. Frémont was sincerely antislavery, and his desire to strike a blow at that institution, coupled with his opinion that Lincoln had given him a blank check, caused him to set up as a policymaker,"* wrote military historian T. Harry Williams. *"Like McClellan, the Pathfinder had assumed that he could define policy without consulting the government. Unlike McClellan, he had announced a policy which ran counter to the one proclaimed by the government. Lincoln and Congress, to keep the border slave states in the Union and to unite Northern opinion on one issue, had said the war was being conducted to restore the Union. The President knew that Frémont's proclamation would alienate conservative support of the war; besides, he had no intention of letting generals make policy."* Historian Grimsley argued: *"Frémont's proclamation, although possibly influenced by a genuine sense of its military necessity, seemed politically motivated after he refused to modify it without direct presidential order."*

Historian Benjamin P. Thomas wrote: *"Frémont considered for six days. He saw no reason to amend his proclamation. He would not 'change or shade it,' he decided. 'It was equal to a victory in the field.' If the President wished to modify it, he could issue the order himself."*

On **Aug. 30, 1861**, Gen. John Frémont declared martial law in Missouri. He ordered the emancipation of slaves in the state. Historian W.E. Smith wrote: *"Frémont rose early on the morning of Aug. 30. At dawn, he called for Edward Davis of Philadelphia to come to hear him read the draft of his emancipation order 'that first gave freedom to the slaves of rebels, and which he had thought out and written in the hours taken from his brief resting time.' Mrs. Frémont had found him at his desk. 'I want you two, but no others,' said the general. He had risen to the occasion as he saw it, to make the decisive stroke to clear Missouri of the rebels who infested her. The Order was published in the Democrat on Aug. 31. The editors called it the 'most important document which has yet appeared in the progress of the war,' and begged for it the support of 'every faithful man, by every word and deed.'"*

Frémont issued his proclamation solely as a war measure in Missouri, not thinking of its effect outside the state. The proclamation freed all slaves held by rebels, confiscated all rebel owned property and tried all those carrying arms by court-martial. He was accused by John G. Nicolay and John Hay of drafting an appeal to the support of the Northern radicals, and regain the popularity which he had lost through Union Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon's Army of the West defeat at the Battle of Wilson's Creek. This was unjust in attributing to the impetuous General a measure of shrewd, calculation which he

never possessed. He planned the proclamation as a weapon against the guerrillas who were destroying Northern Missouri; he designed it, as he said, *“to place in the hands of the military authorities the power to give instantaneous effect to existing laws, and to supply such deficiencies as the conditions of war demand.”* It was characteristic of him for he did not wait to consult the Administration on such a momentous a step; if he had paused to think of its effect outside the turbulence in Missouri, he would have done so. He did not realize how the radicals and Lincoln were at odds over emancipation.

He was warned, as he read it to his wife and friend in that August dawn, that Washington would be bitter. *“General,”* said Edward Davis, *“Mr. Seward will never allow this. He intends to wear down the South by steady pressure, not by blows, and then make himself the arbitrator.”* *“It is for the blows, and then make himself the arbitrator.”* *“It is for the North to say what it will or will not allow.”* Replied Frémont, *“and whether it will arbitrate, or whether it will fight. The time has come for decisive action; this is a war measure, and as such I make it. I have been given full power to crush a rebellion in this department, and I will bring the penalties of rebellion home to every man found striving against the Union.”*

LINCOLN FEARED THE PROCLAMATION WOULD ALIENATE THE BORDER STATES.

Frémont replied to President Lincoln in writing knowing what was coming. Sensing the severity of Lincoln’s displeasure, he sent his wife to Washington on **Sept. 8** to plead his case with the President in person. Jessie and her maid left Missouri for the three-day trip to Washington. Arriving in Washington on September 10, she wrote a note at 8 p.m. to President Lincoln: *“Mrs. Frémont brings to the President, from Gen. Frémont, a letter and some verbal communications which she would be very pleased to deliver with as little delay as possible.”* President Lincoln told her to come *“Now.”* She delivered the letter but argued at length the political reasons for his order emancipating slaves in his theater of the Civil War. When she pressed for an answer to the general’s letter, President Lincoln responded, according to her. *“Maybe by tomorrow. I have a great deal to do - tomorrow if possible or the next day.”* She insisted she would call for the letter, but he sent it to her at Willard’s Hotel.

Jessie’s father, Sen. Thomas Hart Benton, could be expected to swing some weight in Washington. Jessie asked Lincoln on behalf of her husband but to no avail. Lincoln, was entirely unmoved by her imperious manner. Sensing that the president’s mind was already made up and would not change, she informed her husband that, his fate was sealed. Lincoln was going to relieve him of his command.

Abraham Lincoln, like most men of his time, was unaccustomed to taking women seriously on political matters. Usually patient with visitors, even those who challenged him, he merely dismissed her, unable to recognize that at the least, she could have been a valuable firsthand source of information on conditions in Missouri.

Frémont, however, had no intention of taking his fate lying down. Although he had been born in the South, he was loyal, and in many ways a highly commendable American patriot. To defy a presidential order relieving him of command was never an option for him. Historian Allen C. Guelzo wrote: *“Something about Fremont did not quite add up in people’s minds. He was publicly aloof, unbending, and unnaturally preoccupied with the political limelight but without the wisdom to keep himself in it.”*

Determined to hold on to the Union's crucial border states, President Lincoln clashed publicly with Frémont over his hasty emancipation proclamation in Missouri.

Frémont wrote to Lincoln on Sept. 8, 1861: *“Your letter of the 2nd, by special messenger, I know to have been written before you had received mine, and before my telegraphic despatches and the rapid development of critical conditions here had informed you of affairs in this quarter. I had not written to you fully or frequently, first because in the incessant change of affairs I would be oposed [sic] to giving you contradictory accounts, and secondly because the amount of the subjects to be laid before you*

would demand too much of your time. Trusting to have your confidence I have been leaving it to events themselves to shew you whether or not I was shaping affairs here according to your ideas. The shortest communication between Washington and St. Louis generally involves two days, and the employment of two days in time of war goes largely towards success or disaster. I, therefore, went along according to my own judgement, leaving the result of my movements to justify me with you, and as in regard to my proclamation of the 30th. Between the rebel armies, the Provisional Government, and home traitors I felt the position bad and saw danger. In the night I decided upon the proclamation & the form of it. I wrote it the next morning and printed it the same day. I did it without consultation or advice with anyone, acting solely with my best judgement to serve the country and yourself, and perfectly willing to receive the amount of censure which should be thought due if I had made a false step. It was as much a movement in the war as a battle is, and in going with these, I shall have to act according to my judgement of the ground before me, as I did on this occasion. If upon reflection, your better judgement still decides that I am wrong in the article respecting the liberation of slaves I have to ask that you will openly direct me to make the correction. The implied censure will be received [sic] by me as a soldier always should the reprimand of his chief. If I were to retract of my own accord, it would imply that I myself thought it wrong and that I had acted without the reflection which the gravity of the point demanded. But I did not do so. I acted with full deliberation and upon the certain conviction that it was a measure right and necessary, and I think so still.

“In regard to the other point of the proclamation to which you refer I desire to say that I do not think the enemy can either misconstrue it, or urge anything against it, or undertake to make unusual retaliation. The shooting of men who shall rise in arms, within its lines, against an army in the military occupation of a country, is merely a necessary measure of defense and entirely according to the usages of civilized warfare. The article does not at all refer to ordinary prisoners of war, and certainly, our enemies have no ground for requiring that we should waive in their benefit any of the ordinary advantages which the usages of war allow to us. As promptitude is itself an advantage in war, I have to ask that you will permit me to carry out upon the spot the provisions of the proclamation in this respect. Looking at affairs from this point of view I feel satisfied that strong and vigorous measures have now become necessary to the success of our arms, and hoping that my views may have the honor to meet your approval.”

Jessie did not help her husband's case. She delivered a message from her husband on Sept. 10. President Lincoln recalled: “She 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 surprised me by asking why their enemy, Montgomery Blair, had been sent to Missouri. She more than once intimated that if Gen. Frémont should conclude to try conclusions with me, he could set up for himself. The next we heard was that Frémont had arrested Frank Blair and the rupture has since never been healed.”

Col. Frank P. Blair, brother of Post-Master Gen. Montgomery Blair and longtime Benton family friend, wrote a letter to his brother describing the “rascality going on here under Fremont's sanction and even direction.” The message found its way to the President, who sent Post-Master Gen. Blair and Quarter-Master Gen. Meigs to Missouri to investigate the affair.

Historian James M. McPherson wrote: “A wiser man would have treated Lincoln's request as an order. But with a kind of proconsular arrogance that did not sit well with Lincoln, Frémont refused to modify his proclamation without a public order to do so.” On Sept. 11, President Lincoln ordered Frémont to rescind his proclamation.

Mr. Lincoln wrote: “Washington, D. C. Sep. 11. 1861.

Sir: Yours of the 8th in answer to mine of 2nd Inst. is just received. Assuming that you, upon the ground, could better judge of the necessities of your position than I could at this distance, on seeing your proclamation of Aug. 30th, I saw perceived no general objection to it --

The particular clause, however, in relation to the confiscation of property and the liberation of slaves, appeared to me to be objectionable, in it's non-conformity to the Act of Congress passed the 6th of last August upon the same subjects; and hence I wrote you expressing my wish that that clause should be modified accordingly -- Your answer, just received, expresses the preference on your part, that I should make an open order for the modification, which I very cheerfully do-- It is therefore ordered that the said clause of said proclamation mentioned be so modified, held, and construed, as to conform to, and not to transcend, the provisions on the same subject contained in the Act of Congress entitled "An Act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes" Approved, Aug. 6. 1861; and that said act be published at length with this order --

Your Obt. Servt - A. Lincoln”

“Lincoln vs. Frémont”

As the early days of the American Civil War were unfolding the destiny of the republic was being contested on the battlefield, President Lincoln engaged in a dangerous type of battle. For him, the upkeep of Union loyalty within the border states of Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and Delaware was of vital importance to the preservation of the nation. “*I hope to have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky,*” Lincoln observed in the early days of the Civil War.

Jessie continued to exercise control in St. Louis and influence in Washington. She found another connection to the White House in U.S. Marshal Ward Hill Lamon, a friend of Lincolns, whom she wrote in late Oct., shortly before her husband was dismissed from his Missouri command: “*Gen. Lamon will find the copies he asked for enclosed. The originals I had rather not risk - in the mails and they would have to be returned to me as necessary parts of the evidence which may or may not be required - certainly will be, if Gen. Frémonts enemies succeed in carrying out their intention to remove him from this Dept.*” She sent Lamon important papers on the transportation point if the division under **Gen. John Pope and Quartermaster Justus McKinstry** had transportation enough saying they did not march light as Gen. Frémont does — there would have been a victory over Confederate Gen. Sterling Price and his whole force. “*To remove Mr. Frémont will be a great wrong as the necessary investigation following it will prove. It will make immense confusion and require all his control over his friends and the army to get them to do as he will — accept it as an act of authority, not of justice — but in time of war it is treason to question authority. To leave him her without money without the moral aid of the Govt. It is treason to the people. I cannot find smoother phrases for it is the death struggle of our nationality and no time for fair words.*”

Frémont’s refused to compromise in the face of a direct request from his Commander in Chief which cost the president political support. That, along with his administrative and military inadequacy, was the last straw for Lincoln. By late Oct. 1861, the president was ready to relieve him of his command.

Jessie’s abilities as a stateswoman shined. Even President Lincoln commented that she was “*quite a female politician.*” Newspapers described her as “*envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary.*” (Plenipotentiary means diplomat or a person with independent action.) Despite her efforts on Nov. 4, 1861, Lincoln ordered Frémont replaced. Historian Hans L. Trefousse noted that “*Even Secretary of*

the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, radical as he was, was thoroughly persuaded that, in all Lincoln had done concerning Frémont, he had been guided by a true sense of public duty.” The president knew that Frémont would do everything he could, short of outright mutiny, to avoid being replaced. So Lincoln took extraordinary precautions to ensure that the order relieving Frémont would get through to him.

MOUNTAIN DEPARTMENT IN WESTERN VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

The general was not immediately reassigned but returned with his wife first to New York and then to Washington. They attended a Lincoln reception at the White House on **Feb. 10, 1862**. While the reception was underway, the Lincolns’ son Willie was on his deathbed upstairs. Jessie wrote: “*It was announced officially that on account of the illness in the house, there would be no dancing, but the Marine Band at the foot of the steps filled the house with music while the boy lay dying above. A sadder face than that of the President I have really seen. He was receiving at the large door of the East Rooms, speaking to the people as they came but feeling so deeply that he spoke of what he felt and thought instead of welcoming the guests.*” Upon seeing Lincoln sad face and grieved appearance, they offered their hopes for the lad’s recovery and passed on to pay their respects to the President’s wife. The ball was a ghastly failure.

This was not, the end of John Frémont’s military career. Knowing the *Pathfinder of the West* was still popular with the abolitionist wing of the Republican party, President Lincoln, out of the kindness of his heart, in **Mar. 1862** appointed him commander of the newly created Mountain Department in Western Virginia and North Carolina. (The troops under Frémont’s Department did not number more than 12,000. They held several points in Western Virginia, on the Kanawha, and were scattered in extreme Eastern Kentucky along the Ohio River from Wheeling to the Kentucky line.)

Later he received another opportunity in the Eastern theater of the war — where he became one of the generals defeated in Stonewall Jackson’s famous Valley Campaign. After he failed to trap and beat a force under Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson, the president reassigned Frémont and his army, moving them from an independent command to one of the several corps in the Army of Virginia under Gen. John Pope. Pope was Frémont’s subordinate in Missouri, and Frémont still outranked him. He refused the assignment and was never offered another command.

Jessie never outgrew, her attachment to the South, to which she was united by many ties of blood. During the famine following the war, she applied to Congress for relief, which was granted, with a ship to carry the supplies the Freedman’s Bureau. Relating to Mrs. Dix one evening the case of one of Lt. Frémont’s men, who had been disabled by being wounded in both legs, and whom Congress had refused a pension on the ground that he had not been regularly enlisted at the time the wound was inflicted. Preston King, of N.Y., chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, saw that the man got his pension. With what tender gratitude the man, Alexis Ayot, a Canadian by birth, came to thank her! “*I cannot kneel to thank you,*” he said, *balancing himself upon his crutches, “Je n’ai plus de jambes; but you are my Sainte Madonne, et je vous fais ma priere.”*

For the rest of the War, Jessie’s involvement in politics took on a different form. She attempted to salvage her husband’s reputation by publishing *The Story of the Guard; A Chronicle of the War*; reprinted in the *Atlantic Monthly* defending him. The book described the exploits of Frémont’s bodyguard who served him during his command of the Western Department. The book allowed Frémont to tell his version of his days as commander of the Western Department.

Jessie became increasingly involved in the Sanitary Commission. She took an active role in the organization of the Sanitary Commission’s Fair in Philadelphia **in 1864**. Despite opposing political views, Jessie worked with Mary Ellen McClellan, wife of the disposed general and Democratic

presidential candidate, on the Arms and Trophies committee. Jessie headed a committee to publish the memoirs of sanitary commission workers. (Sanitary fairs were civilian-organized bazaars and expositions dedicated to raising funds on behalf of the United States Sanitary Commission and other charitable relief organizations. Over the course of the Civil War, they became one of the most popular means of fund-raising for the Union cause.)

Frémont's final hurrah during the war might be seen as an attempt at revenge against Abraham Lincoln. In May 1864 Frémont was nominated by a radical faction of the Republican Party to replace Lincoln as the party's candidate in the presidential election to be held that November. Like most things Frémont attempted during the war, this too failed. It became apparent that he could never gain enough support to supersede Lincoln, and he eventually withdrew his candidacy.

Following the War, the Frémont retreated to Pocomo on the Hudson River near Terrytown, N.Y. In the financial panic of 1873, Frémont, who had invested heavily in railroad stock, lost everything and declared bankruptcy. His family moved to New York City, where they were supported by the money Jessie earned from her published articles and stories in magazines. Undaunted by their financial situation, Jessie began writing books, articles, and children's stories to help support the family. She was to continue this work for nearly 20 years, namely memoirs of her husband's and her own, time in the American West — back when the West was an exotic frontier. She wrote: *A Year of American Travel: Narrative of Personal Experience*, a story about her journey to California in 1849, and *Souvenirs of My Time*.

TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR OF ARIZONA

Frémont was able to regain a measure of his old prominence. Having previously been elected governor of California in 1850, the 19th President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed him as the fifth Territorial Governor of Arizona from 1878 to 1881. However, his service as governor was more in name than in fact, as his secretary, J.J. Gosper performed many of his governing duties.

Jessie, the governor's indomitable wife, was the catalyst for the war between the two top territorial officials. She was the strong-willed champion of her husband and had her own Washington connections, and had no fear of challenging a mere Frémont subordinate.

She came to the territorial capital of Prescott with her husband but left a year later complaining of health problems to become her husband's eyes and ears back in New York and Washington. She discovered that Gosper was backstabbing her precious John Charles.

At the close of a speech by John Frémont in 1878, Jessie was loudly cheered; she was liberally presented bouquets; three cheers were being for Mrs. Frémont; then three more for Mrs. Frémont; then six more for "*our Jessie*;" and then the effect, we were told, "*was stunning*."

Jessie, with her daughter Lily, her son Frank, her Irish maid Mary, her cook Ah Chung, and a dog named Thor, arrived in Prescott on Oct. 6, 1878. Jessie stayed only one year, saying the high altitude was terrible for her health. Frémont and Elizabeth later joined Jessie in Tucson. During this time she belittled the importance of her writing as she felt it was inappropriate for her to be the wage earner.

She moved to New York City where she was in constant correspondence not only with her daughter and husband but with officials in Washington, D.C. She was joined in New York by her husband and daughter in 1881 when Frémont resigned as territorial governor.

During a trip to New York in **1890**. He was honored as a retired Maj. Gen. of the U.S. Army, and as one of the great Americans of the 19th century. By being added to the Army's retired list, he qualified for a pension to ease his financial burden.

On Sunday, July 13, 1890, Fremont (age 77) died of peritonitis at his residence in New York City.

His death was unexpected, and his brief illness was not generally known. On July 8, he had been affected by the heat of the hot summer day. On Wednesday he had a chill and was confined to his bedroom. His symptoms progressed to peritonitis (an abdominal infection) which caused his death. He was buried in Rockland Cemetery in Sparkill, N.Y.

Jessie decided to move back to Los Angeles with her daughter. She learned of her husband's death on July 28, 1890, in New York City three months after he was allowed to resign from the Army with pension.

The next July the two ladies moved into a house built for them in Los Angeles by a committee of California women as a token of their high regard. Congress, in recognition of his valued services, granted Jessie a widow's pension of \$2,000 a year. She was in good health until two and a half years before her death when an accident made her an invalid. In a wheelchair, she continued to enjoy the outdoors.

Jessie died on Dec. 27, 1902, surviving her husband by 12 years. She left behind her daughter Elizabeth and two sons: John Charles (Charley) and Francis (Frank). A giant box of fragrant and beautiful roses was sent on Dec. 29, 1902, by Mrs. James A. Garfield, wife of assassinated President James Garfield. The rites of the Episcopal Church were conducted at 10:30 a.m. on Dec. 30, at Christ Church. She was interred in Rosedale Cemetery in Los Angeles. (Women gain the right to vote in 1910.)

Jessie Benton Frémont was one of Victorian America's most controversial women for much of the 19th century. She managed to carve out a vital role for herself as a writer, dedicated abolitionist — political activist against slavery long before women could vote. She demonstrated that women were capable of equal rights with men.

She was present at America's expansionist phase: the opening of Westward routes; the gold rush; California's statehood, the birth of the Republican party and its first presidential campaign, with her husband as a candidate, the Missouri conflict during the Civil War. Confidante and mediator to the inner circle of politicians, she held no appointed or elected office but offered significant behind-the-scenes influence and a sounding board.

She was intimate friends with Elizabeth Blair Lee, married to Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee a U.S. Navy officer during the Civil War, Horace Greeley, Abraham Lincoln, Dorothea Dix, John Greenleaf Whittier, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, an American educator who opened the first English-language kindergarten in the U.S. Elizabeth and her husband, James, made their home a station on the Underground Railroad and helped to organize the Women's Rights Convention, Gen. William T. Sherman, and President Theodore Roosevelt. (Shortly following the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, 59-year-old Dorothea Dix offered her services to the Union Army and was appointed the Superintendent of Female Nurses in June. She would work without compensation throughout the war.)

Whatever were John's hopes or his disappointment, Jessie shared them. When he accepted the nomination from so radical a party, it meant the breaking up of many friendships for her, which was a genuine grief to a woman of her temperament. The anguish she endured during the first months of the war between the North and the South, spent in St. Louis among familiar faces, as the wife of a Northern general had estranged her from her Southern friends. The anguish left its record in her beautiful hair, turning it from a warm brown to utterly white within a few weeks.

She had versatility and adaptiveness that was true of pioneer American woman. She made many friends in foreign lands as she had throughout America. The Count de la Garde, a cousin of Eugene and Horsens Beauharnois, whom she knew in Paris, at his death left his collection of souvenirs of the Bonaparte family, saying she was the only "real" American woman he had ever known. He said, he had known others of her countrywomen, but they were but imitations of English or French women, while in

her he felt the originality of America and the new frontier.

After the war, while her younger children were still growing up, and during her husband's lifetime, she lived for some years in New York, on the Hudson that still bore its Indian name, "Pocoho." She moved back to California the State that once gave her health, wealth, and honors, to be near the great sea, which made her feel fully alive. Her life had been full of changes and events, and her alert intelligence and quick sympathies made her keenly susceptible to old age. "*We are tired, my heart and I.*" That was all, for one who knew every phase of her life had borne testimony to that "*sweet and happy and forbearing temper which has remained proof against the wearing of time.*" - cwk

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2018 - 2019 Lecture Series for the LCWRT

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Sept. 26	Richard Thomas	"Dept. of the South on the Offensive"
Oct. 24	Candice Shy Cooper	"Lincoln's General's Wives"
Nov. 28	Doug Bostick	"Battlefield Preservation"
Jan. 23, 2019	Dr. "Bud" Robinson	Robert E. Lee & Quest for Peace
Feb. 27, 2019	Jack Davis	Rhett & the Fire Eaters
Mar. 27, 2019	To be announced	
April 24, 2019	Dr. Jim Spirek	Wrecks of Beaufort

We will meet in Pinckney Hall in Sun City unless otherwise noted.

* * *

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LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2018/2019

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Please check the area(s) for which you are willing to volunteer:

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MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

is published by

The Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.

located in the greater Hilton Head area of South Carolina.

Founded in 2000 and dedicated to Civil War history,
education and battlefield preservation.

A Not-for-Profit, Charitable Organization

As qualified under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code