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## California's Dilemma: Northern And Southern Sympathies During The American Civil War

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## California's Dilemma: Northern And Southern Sympathies During The American Civil War

### Abstract

The goal of this article is to highlight the military, social, and political issues between Northern and Southern sympathizers in California during the American Civil War. The California Gold Rush saw many Americans move west to cash in on the Gold Mines of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. However, the move west also meant that people would bring their politics and ideas with them, which included how to create slave and free territory. California would become a free state due to the Missouri Compromise, but many Southerners living in the state contested the idea. During California's first decade of statehood, state politicians with Southern backgrounds fought to make California a slave state.

California's Southern sympathies during the Civil War turned the state into a border state. Newspapers and politicians with deep Southern ties denounced the Union Government. California would not see a Pro-Union state government elected until 1862. Even though the statehouse was for the Union, Pro-Southerners continued to weaken the state for the Confederacy. One of the concerns for politicians not securing California for the Union was Confederate expansion. The worry of many in Washington DC was a Confederate expansion to the Pacific Ocean. Pro-Southern ties in California would allow the Confederate Army would have easy access to California due to the small military presence in the West. In order to combat this, the Union Army and the California state government had to identify the state's Pro-Southern elements. Removing Southern sympathies in California would take until the end of the Civil War.

## Harris: CA's Dilemma: North And South Sympathies During The Civil War

The mystique of California in nineteenth-century America drew many to its borders. Visitors described the region's beauty and untapped natural resources as a prize for the United States. Northerners and Southerners alike felt strongly about expansion to the Pacific Ocean. What became known as “Manifest Destiny” pushed America into a war with Mexico to acquire western lands. The Mexican-American War ended with an American victory. After peace talks, the conflict officially ended by way of a peace treaty. What became known as the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo gave the United States territory that included California and the rest of the current day western states.<sup>1</sup> Reports of what California had to offer began to entice people from the North and South to move west. Travelers publishing their findings in newspaper articles and books described how bountiful and full of gold the region could be.<sup>2</sup> The rush of people from the East to strike it rich in California goldfields gave California a broad mixture of social classes and ideas. However, this move would bring political fights about slavery that would spill into the more significant national conflict brewing during the 1850s. Political and social infighting across the country by 1860 occurred in California as well. The large population of Southerners living in California during the American Civil War made the state a border state rather than a stable Union state. Californians fought over how they would respond to America fracturing along sectional lines through much of the Civil War. Even though California did not send troops to fight in the primary campaigns of the war, Californians with Northern and Southern roots would be in continuous conflict. The roots of how California acted as a border state instead of a part of the Union came from the political makeup of the state before the Civil War started.

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<sup>1</sup> Anson McCook, *Journal Of The Executive Proceedings Of The Senate Of The United States Of America From December 1, 1845 to August 14, 1848*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1887), 339-340.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Dana, *Two Years Before The Mast And Twenty Four Years After* (Santa Barbara: Narrative Press, 2001), 121-123.

The population of California had a large number of Southerners living within its borders. The issue of if California should have slavery within its borders occurred during California's Constitutional Convention. One of the first Californian United States Senators was William Gwin. The senator initially hailed from Mississippi and was a proponent of California becoming a slave state. During the state constitutional convention, Gwin pushed for rewriting California's old laws from its time as a Mexican possession. The removal of old laws in California would remove the ban on slavery in the territory. However, Gwin's move was met by stiff resistance from the other delegates, especially in areas where miners lived. Delegates that represented the miners felt that the convention should focus on protecting labor.<sup>3</sup> California was settled by people that worked hard and wanted to find their way in the world. Many of the delegates and the people they represented did not want California to fall into the same problems in other parts of the United States when addressing slavery. The majority of delegates agreed that discussing slavery should be tabled, and California stayed a free territory.<sup>4</sup> When Californian delegates went to Washington DC to be ratified as a state, fighting at the local and national level for what kind of state California would be, many national politicians like Jefferson Davis (who was also a friend of William Gwin's) felt California should have slaves to help them work the mines more efficiently.<sup>5</sup> However, due to the Compromise of 1850, California was brought into the Union as a free state in 1850. However, the status of California as a free state did not stop Southern politicians from trying to adjust Californians' perspective on the slave issue.

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard Richards, *California Gold Rush And The Coming Civil War*, (New York, Vintage Press, 2007), 81.

<sup>4</sup> John Browne, *Report Of The Debates In The Convention Of California On The Formation Of The State Constitution*, (Washington DC, John Towers Publishing, 1850), 494.

<sup>5</sup> Jefferson Davis, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis 1856-1860*, ed. Lynda Crist and Mary Dix (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1989), 318.

Even though California came into the Union as a free state in 1850, Southern politicians controlled how California voted and stood on national issues. By the time of the Civil War, Southerners held several vital political positions within local and national offices. Under the tutelage of Senator William Gwin, local political offices became a Democrat position, and a sizeable Southern majority ruled California during the 1850s.<sup>6</sup> The disagreements between Northern and Southern politicians in California mirrored the issues at the national level during the 1850s. Friction between Northern and Southern politicians in California and Congress would set the stage for a crucial Presidential Election in 1860. Due to the emergence of the Republican Party that wanted to remove the spread of slavery in the United States, tension occurred in California.

By 1859 David Broderick had become a United States Senator for California. The newly elected California senator had moved from the North to cash in on the gold rush. However, over time, Broderick moved through political circles and became part of the California Democrat Party. Broderick wanted to reform the use of slavery in the country, which made him a target nationally and locally in California by Southern politicians.<sup>7</sup> The split between the Democrats between North and South made once political allies within the same party to become enemies.

One of the noted disagreements between Northern and Southern Democrats in California was between David Broderick and David Terry. While Broderick was a Northerner, Terry was a transplanted Kentuckian that moved to California to start a new life as many people in the late 1840s. Terry practiced law and was elected to be the California Supreme Court's Chief Justice after California became a state. Like Senator Gwin, Terry believed that slavery would be good

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Quinn, *The Rivals: William Gwin, David Broderick, and the Birth of California* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 93-94.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

business for California.<sup>8</sup> This belief would put Terry at odds with Northern Democrats and anyone who did not believe in slavery living in California. Disagreements within the party would lead to personal attacks in speeches and the media. Personal attacks pushed David Broderick and David Terry to duel outside the city limits of San Francisco.

By 1859, Senator Gwin and the Southern political machine in California began to lose steam and control over the state. David Terry would be a causality of this shift in voting, removing him from the Supreme Court. Terry felt that his ally, David Broderick, did not want to support his re-election campaign. Terry felt Broderick slighted his honor, and insults occurred between both men.<sup>9</sup> Broderick and Terry reached a point that both men felt that each man was questioning the others' honor. Like most honorable men that lived in the era, one's honor was sacred. If another man questioned, another's an honor, the way to fix it was to engage in a duel. The duel occurred on September 13, 1859, which left Broderick mortally wounded. Senator Broderick's last words were that he "was shot because he did not believe or back slavery and opposed the Southern element in California politics."<sup>10</sup> Newspapers across the state ran stories about the duel, shocking local populations, and national audiences.

The old Democrat Party in California ceased to exist after the 1860 election due to the Republican Party upswing. However, Southern leaning politicians still looked to attempt to break California away from the Union. The first attempt was to create the Pacific Republic that was neutral to both sides of the conflict. Creating a republic would mean California could do business with the United States and the Confederate States without having to choose aside.<sup>11</sup> The idea of

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<sup>8</sup> Albert Buchanan, *David S. Terry: Dueling Judge Of California*, (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1956), 93.

<sup>9</sup> "The Late Affair in San Francisco," *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 4, 1859.

<sup>10</sup>"The Broderick-Terry Duel. Mr. Broderick Shot," *Daily Alta California*, September 14, 1859.

<sup>11</sup> Imogene Spaulding, "The Attitude of California To The Civil War," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California* 9, no. 1/2 (1912): 108.

establishing the Pacific Republic separate from the rest of America was not new in 1861.

President Thomas Jefferson was one of the first people to envision the Pacific Republic. After the Louisiana Purchase and subsequent exploration of the Pacific Ocean, Jefferson did not see a unified country. Jefferson foresaw the Pacific region made up of different republics that were independent of the United States government.<sup>12</sup> However, California would not enter the American landscape until forty years after Jefferson made his prediction. During this interlude period, California became part of Mexico and was given a certain amount of autonomy in the territory's governance. The vast distance from Mexico City to major California population centers made California voices not heard, and government decrees not followed. When Mexican authorities attempted to reign in the autonomy afforded to Californians, conflict, and resistance would occur within the territory. Resisting the decrees of the Mexican government embolden Californians. Being able to defend themselves from a ruling power made Californians believe that they could handle their affairs. Mexico was in desperate need of the resources found in California, so they were cautious is causing civil unrest. By the 1840s, the United States had its eye on expanding into California. The result of this expansion was the previously mentioned Mexican-American War, which ended with California becoming a part of the United States. While some Californians were happy with being a part of the United States, other citizens looked at America as another ruler over their lands.

After annexation by the United States, many Californians expected the same autonomy the region had enjoyed under Mexican rule. When California's acceptance into the Union became a debate along sectional lines in Washington DC, the California legislature took offense. A signed letter was drafted and sent to the United States Congress to address their concerns about

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Writings of Thomas Jefferson 1789-1826*, ed. Andrew Lipscomb and Albert Bergh (Washington DC, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), 151-152.

statehood. The letter stated that if they request was not met, "they will not further ask attention from Congress and leave us alone in our affairs."<sup>13</sup> California became a state after the debate in Congress. However, the idea of a separate nation or republic seemed inevitable for many living in the state. The distance from Sacramento, the state capital, to Washington DC was almost three thousand miles. The isolation from their representatives and the national seat of power made Californians feel indifferent about their country. Newspapers in California ran stories about these feelings of separation regularly. Articles routinely pointed out, "California and Oregon cannot be expected to remain forever attached to a government a month's ride away from them, the bonds of empire must become feeble."<sup>14</sup> The sectional issues of slavery only heightened feelings of distrust of a national government. National elections held in 1860 also solidified California's ideas, creating the Pacific Republic and splitting from the Union.

To understand the feelings of Californians about the presidential election of 1860, an overview of how the rest of the country voted is necessary. Political issues of the 1860 election season would also split political parties nationwide. The Democrat Party in California and at the national level would sectionalize along with the idea of slavery and geographic ideations. In the Presidential race, northern Democrats nominated Stephen Douglas as their candidate. Northern Democrats did not believe that slavery should expand beyond its current borders. Southern Democrats selected John Breckenridge as their candidate. Southern Democrats wanted to expand slavery in the United States to as much territory as possible. Both veins of the Democrat Party would be pulling from the same voter pool to weaken their stake in the presidency. The split amongst the party would also occur at the local level, making it difficult for the Democrats to

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<sup>13</sup> *Journal Of The Senate During The First Session Of The State Legislature of California*, (San Jose, J. Winchester Printer, 1850), 1283.

<sup>14</sup> "The Mexican Boundary," *Daily Alta California*, May 24, 1850.



have a unified front. While the Democrat Party split over slavery, while a new political party came out of the 1850s turmoil unified on their party view of slavery.

The Republican Party believed that slavery should not continue in the United States. Republicans ran on the platform that slavery was not in line with the values of the country<sup>15</sup> The Republicans had first attempted a run at the White House in 1856. The Republican candidate, Senator John Fremont of California, lost to James Buchanan by a large margin.<sup>16</sup> The next four years gave the Republicans time to refine their message and find a stronger candidate to run for president. Republicans would find their candidate in Abraham Lincoln. The politician from Illinois was able to speak in the language that the ordinary person could understand. Lincoln believed that everyone should be treated equally and not divided. Lincoln stated that slaves were the equal of every man.<sup>17</sup> While the Lincoln, Douglas, and Breckenridge would be the frontrunners for the presidency, there was a fourth party that entered the race. The Constitutionalist Party ran John Bell as their choice for president. Bell and his party ran under the premise that by avoiding slavery, the United States would stay whole and run like it always had. The different stances by the political parties pushed most Southerners back to the Southern Democrat Party, which would also push the country to fracture.

In the South, Lincoln did not receive any of the electoral votes and few votes in the popular count. However, the South did not have the votes that the North had. The result was a lopsided election that installed Abraham Lincoln as the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. Election results in California mirrored the national results. Northerners living in the state voted

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<sup>15</sup>. Horace Greenly, *Proceedings Of The First Three Republican National Conventions* (Minneapolis: Charles Johnson, 1893), 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> "Election Returns," *Stockton Independent*, December 6, 1856.

<sup>17</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 3, ed. Roy Blaser (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 16-17.

for Lincoln or Douglas, and Southerners voted for Breckenridge.<sup>18</sup> A small percentage of the voting population in California voted for Constitutionalist John Bell. By December of 1860, the Union began to dissolve, and Californians had to decide how they would deal with the new threat to their state nation.

Californian politicians would not commit to how they would deal with the conflict since the state had a diverse population. The non-committal approach to the beginning of the conflict was echoed in newspapers as many Californians felt that if other states could not get along with the federal government, why should they be punished?<sup>19</sup> Even though citizens with Southern backgrounds wanted a republic with using slavery being an option, the majority did not approve. Many felt the best course of action for California would become a neutral republic in trade with both sides. However, the region could become a haven for populations from both sides that wanted to be safe from conflict.<sup>20</sup> California began to look like a border state by not committing to a course of action early in the Civil War. However, the California state elections of 1861 changed the political and social dynamics of California.

By the end of 1861, Americans slowly began to understand that the Civil War would be a long hard fought conflict between North and South. Californians became galvanized by the fighting and began to turn against the Democratic Party. The party itself would split between moderates that sided with the North and holdovers from the Southern influencers of the party. Most citizens wanted California to continue to be part of the Union and support the North. Union support was evident by the state elections of 1861. The Republican Party won elections across the state. In turn, the state legislature moved to support the North politically as well as financially

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<sup>18</sup> "State Election Returns," *Sacramento Daily Union*, November 8, 1860.

<sup>19</sup> "Our Washington Correspondent," *Daily Alta California*, January 8, 1861.

<sup>20</sup> "Letter From General Volney Howard," *San Francisco Herald*, January 25, 1861.

during the Civil War. One of the first pieces of legislation penned by the newly elected state government was to pledge allegiance to the United States. The pledge written by the California State Senate proclaimed that:

The people of California are devoted to the Constitution and Union of the United States, and will not fail in fidelity and fealty to that Constitution and Union, now, in the hour of trial and peril. That California is ready to maintain the rights and honor of the National Government at home and abroad, and at all times to respond to any requisition that made be made upon her to defend the republic against foreign and domestic foes.<sup>21</sup>

While California's State Senate passed this proclamation, it did not do so unanimously. Several Democratic Senators with Southern ties voiced their displeasure with the pledge of allegiance to the North.

Dissension from these same Senators came when the Federal Government proposed a tax to be paid by all to help fund the war effort. California, under the leadership of Governor Leland Stanford, accepted the income tax that Washington DC imposed on states still left in the Union. However, Californians that still believed in being neutral to the conflict brewing in the East voiced their displeasure of the Legislature's Pro-Union stance. These same Californians pushed for neutrality during the Civil War so that the economy could still be open to both sides and any foreign entities that wanted to trade with California. The Pacific region was thousands of miles away from the war's significant battlefields and did not directly affect California by the end of 1862. This distance away from significant conflict gave Californians a false sense of hope that the Civil War would not affect them. However, due to the inability of the Union Army to create a

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<sup>21</sup> *Journal Of The Senate During The Thirteenth Session Of The State Legislature of California*, (Sacramento, Benjamin Avery Printer, 1862), 51.

large enough force to help protect the region and the population of Pro-Southern Californians opened the door for instability with the state until the end of the Civil War.

One of California's, and the rest of the Pacific region's unique attributes was the distance from the rest of the United States during the Civil War. The farthest western state on either side of the Civil War in 1861 was Texas. While this geographic border seemed large enough to protect California from offensive military operations against it, the exact opposite was true. The United States Army in the Pacific was large before 1860. However, as Southern states began to secede, the military presence in California changed rapidly. The army had a large number of Southern-born officers filling their ranks in the state. Once the Southern states left the Union, officers that were Southern had to decide if staying in the United States Army would be the right decision. If Southerners stayed in the United States Army, they might have to fight against their families. Many Southerners considered this a conflict of interest. By the first major campaign of the American Civil War, twenty percent of the regular Army officer corps resigned their commissions and joined the Confederacy.<sup>22</sup> Officers stationed at California outposts consisted mainly of Southerners. Lessons learned on the frontier in California would help many Confederate generals during the American Civil War. Military officers were not the only Southern-born people to leave California to assist with the Confederacy. Senator William Gwin left the senate and became an ambassador for the Confederate government. Gwin would eventually create a pro-slavery colony in Mexico that would be a thorn in the Union Army's side well after the Civil War ended.<sup>23</sup> David Terry, the same man who shot David Broderick, left

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<sup>22</sup> Clayton Newell, *The Regular Army Before The Civil War 1845-1860* (Washington DC: Center Of Military History, 2014), 51.

<sup>23</sup> George Davis, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation Of The Official Records Of The Union And Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 50, pt. 2 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), 1110.

California to return to Texas. Terry would lead cavalry troops in the Trans-Mississippi Theater.<sup>24</sup> Early 1861 would see the majority of Army personnel leaving California for the East and left California to fend for itself.

In order to protect California, the U.S. Army reorganized. The Department of The Pacific spanned a large geographic area, responsible for California, Oregon, Washington Territories, and the New Mexico Territory. Even though the department was the largest in the United States, it had the smallest personnel to protect the region. The department would have to defend against Confederate threats, Native American uprisings, and possible movements from Canada. When General Charles Sumner took over in March 1861, he set out to bolster the army's size in California. To increase the army's strength, Sumner had to rely on California to supply volunteer enlistments. The call for troops in California was met with the same fervor in other parts of the country during enlistment periods in the Civil War. Notices of enlistments sprang up in newspapers to help fill the ranks.<sup>25</sup> Like in other states, Californians were volunteering to fight wanted to preserve their country. Volunteers were also fighting to defend their state from whatever enemy may be a threat. The depletion of regular army units meant volunteers trained in different military specialties. Volunteers received training to be in the infantry, cavalry, and artillery. General Sumner and his replacement General George Wright understood that working in with the California state government would be the only way for the state to defend itself from the enemy. Washington DC was too tied up with operations in the East to send support. However, Californians were ready to defend their state if necessary. Fixed Fortifications and other defensive measures constructed in California occurred with little help from Washington

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<sup>24</sup> Buchanan, *David S. Terry: Dueling Judge Of California*, 134.

<sup>25</sup> "Notice Of Enlistment," *Daily National Democrat*, May 19, 1861.

DC. The War Department focused on defending infrastructure in the East, not western territories or states. The ingenuity of Californians turned California into a defensible state. Even with defenses constructed, California was still a target for the South.

One of the wartime goals of the Confederacy was to expand to the Pacific Ocean. Many Confederate leaders, including President Jefferson Davis, thought the South should form large colonies in New Mexico and California. These colonies could expand the economy of the Confederacy.<sup>26</sup> Confederates were confident that they could quickly obtain land in the west due to the demographics of California. By the beginning of the American Civil War, forty percent of the Californian population was from the South.<sup>27</sup> The Confederacy assumed that California's civilian population would react to secession like Southerners from the United States Army had by aligning with the Confederacy. If the Californian population revolted against the Pro-Union state government, then Confederate annexation was possible. The Confederate Army and Confederate sympathizers located in California had to work together for annexation to work.

The Knights of the Golden Circle had one goal: to expand slavery in the Americas. The secret society intended to create a vast empire of slavery that included the Confederate States of America, the Southwest, California, Northern Mexico, and the Caribbean.<sup>28</sup> The group did not favor the Republican Party or any other group that did not believe in slavery. The Knights of the Golden Circle had its origins in the 1850s as the sectional politics of slavery began to form in the United States.<sup>29</sup> The group became active in areas of the United States where the possibility of slavery could take root. Due to California's vast Southern population, the Knights of the Golden

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<sup>26</sup> Jefferson Davis, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis 1849-1852*, ed. Lynda Crist and Mary Dix (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 28.

<sup>27</sup> Alvin Josephy, *The Civil War In The American West* (New York: Vintage Press, 1993), 233.

<sup>28</sup> *An Authentic Exposition Of The K.G.C. A History Of Secession From 1834 to 1861* (Indianapolis: C.O. Perrine, 1861), 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> James Pomfrey, *A True Disclosure And Exposition Of The Knights Of The Golden Circle* (Cincinnati: J.W. Pomfrey, 1861), vi-vii.

Circle had a large following. Estimates of enrollment in the society in California put its total in the thousands.<sup>30</sup> The group's secrecy meant that it was hard for officials to pin down who was a member—not knowing who the members of the society were, led to speculation and paranoia amongst the civilian population as to who could be a member, leading to many false arrests. Beyond a secret society, Southern sympathizers also had newspapers that were against the Pro-Union government.

The Southern part of California became a focal point of the secessionist movement in California. The secession movement occurred in Southern California due to the climate and proximity to Southern territory. The majority of Southerners coming across from Texas stayed in the Southern part of California. This sizeable Southern population also led to Southern ideas and ways of thinking to be present in California. By the time of the 1860 Presidential election, many Southern California Newspapers like the *Los Angeles Star* were Pro-Southern. Articles written for the paper would discuss how President Lincoln was a divider of the people and denounced for calls for troops to fight the South.<sup>31</sup> The California state government initially reasoned that the dissent's voice would eventually cease since California was removed geographically from the rest of the Confederacy. However, events within California would push the government to take a stronger stance against Pro-Southern groups.

Lack of a military presence in San Francisco allowed Southern sympathizers to deal a blow to the Union. The total Union force located in the San Francisco area installations was less than six hundred men.<sup>32</sup> If the Knights Of The Golden Circle could defeat the Federal Army, the

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<sup>30</sup> George Davis, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation Of The Official Records Of The Union And Confederate Armies*, vol. 50, pt. 1, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1897), 590.

<sup>31</sup> "National Affairs," *Los Angeles Star*, May 11, 1861.

<sup>32</sup> Asbury Harpending, *The Great Diamond Hoax And Other Strange Events In The Life of Asbury Harpending* (San Francisco: James Barney Publishing, 1913), 30.

South could claim California's state. Tons of gold shipped to Washington DC could be sent to Richmond instead, bolstering the Confederate economy. The goal of the Southern agents was to recruit a small percentage of the vast Southern population in California to fight for the Confederacy.<sup>33</sup> While the plan seemed straightforward, the Southern agents could not execute the plan.

The Confederate plot in San Francisco did not pass the planning stages. The first reason was the refusal of General Albert Sidney Johnston to back the plan, even though he was a Southerner. Johnston was still loyal to his oath and post until his home state left the Union.<sup>34</sup> Another blow was the leaking of their plan to Federal officials. The Federals made plans to remove General Johnston as commander of the Pacific Department and increase San Francisco's defenses.<sup>35</sup> Due to these developments, the Knights of the Golden Circle could not mount a sufficient force for the operation.

Due to the increase of Confederate activity within California, rules put into place that military officials could enforce if an uprising occurred. The California state legislature passed an ordinance stating that California and its citizens pledged allegiance to the Union. If anyone within the state helped the Confederacy, imprisonment, and even death were possible punishments.<sup>36</sup> The resolution gave the new California volunteers into the army the authority to deal with any Confederate uprising the way they saw fit in California. However, the Union needed to explain its position to Confederate sympathizers. The orator Reverend Thomas "Starr" King was used to quell Pro-Southern sympathy within the state. King was a Unitarian minister

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<sup>33</sup> Harpending, *The Great Diamond Hoax And Other Strange Events In The Life of Asbury Harpending*, 31.

<sup>34</sup> William Johnston, *The Life of General Albert Sidney Johnston* (New York: D. Appleton And Company, 1878), 261-262.

<sup>35</sup> George Davis, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation Of The Official Records Of The Union And Confederate Armies*, vol. 50, pt. 1, 472.

<sup>36</sup> *Statutes Of California Passed At The Twelfth Session of the Legislature 1861* (Sacramento: Charles Botts State Printer, 1861), 686.



by trade who spoke openly against slavery and sectional politics.<sup>37</sup> His ability to use plain language helped extinguish Pro-Southern hot spots and began to turn California back into a solid Pro-Union state. However, even as the Civil War was drawing to a close, Pro-Southern groups within California attempted to cause disruption and give hope to the Confederate cause.

The primary source of income in California during the American Civil War was gold. Gold was sought out all over the world and was the backbone of most countries' economies. Mines of Northern California and Nevada were responsible for \$173 Million worth of gold and silver circulated into currency.<sup>38</sup> A direct assault on California by the Confederate Army was not practicable due to the Union Army's presence in the New Mexico Territory. Operational plans changed to using the Knights Of The Golden Circle and other Confederate partisans to disrupt California's gold trade. This disruption could help the Confederacy in two ways. The first was the economic benefit of taking gold and sending on to Richmond for use in the war effort. The second goal would be to disrupt the Californian economy so severely that unrest would occur. The boldest attempt of any of these operations was the Bullion Bend raid outside of Placerville, California.

In early 1864, the gold coming from the Sierra Mountains to San Francisco was supplemented by the Comstock Lode in Nevada. While California had the gold, Nevada mines were rich in silver ore.<sup>39</sup> The most significant obstacle surrounding the discovery of silver in Nevada was transportation for commercial use. Railroads were not built in the territory and would not be regularly used in the region until the decade after the American Civil War ended. Main overland trail routes were long and were not direct from Virginia City to San Francisco,

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<sup>37</sup> "An Oregonian On Starr King," *Los Angeles Star*, August 23, 1862.

<sup>38</sup> Norman Marshall, "Protecting The Gold," *Branding Iron* 214 (Winter 1998): 13.

<sup>39</sup> Grant Smith, *The History Of The Comstock Lode* (Reno: University Of Nevada Press, 1998), 2-5.

adding to travel time. Wells Fargo created a new stagecoach line to speed up the travel time from the mines to delivery to San Francisco. The line would travel from Virginia City, Nevada to Sacramento, California, by way of Placerville. The new southern route through the Sierra Nevada Mountains allowed for faster service through California.<sup>40</sup> However, unlike the route north through the mountains, the south route was not as populated and developed. The trail south was desolate, especially between Nevada and Placerville, California. In this desolate region is where Confederate partisans would attack the stagecoach line looking for silver and gold.

The raid carried out by a group of Pro-Confederate's calling themselves Captain Ingram's Partisans. The goal of the group was to raid the stagecoaches coming from Nevada along the Placerville route. Ingram's men stopped two stagecoaches coming from Nevada on the night of June 30, 1864. After holding stopping both coaches at gunpoint, the Confederates took several bags of silver and gold. Captain Ingram left a note stating his intentions with the silver and gold for the authorities. The bullion would be going to finance Confederate operations in the state of California.<sup>41</sup> Over the next several weeks, a massive search ensued, looking for the group. Eventually, the majority of the group was captured or killed in a shootout. Almost all of the bullion taken during the raid went back to the original owners. The captured men stood trial and did not know their fates until the fall of 1865, nearly four months after significant hostilities ended in the Civil War.<sup>42</sup> The Bullion Bend Raid would be one of the last significant attempts of Pro-Southerners to affect how Californians looked at the Civil War. The state would remain

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<sup>40</sup> Oscar Winther, *Express And Stagecoach Days In California From Gold Rush To Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1936), 159-189.

<sup>41</sup> "Daring Stage Robbery," *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 2, 1864.

<sup>42</sup> "Statements Of Poole," *Sacramento Daily Union*, October 2, 1865.

loyal to the Union, and the attempts to cause a panic and have the people rethink their loyalties did not work.

The thesis presented in the introduction presented an argument that many Californians had strong Southern ties that made California act as a border state during the American Civil War. California acted like a border state during the Civil War due to Southern-born politicians' popularity that held principal political offices in the state and California's isolation from the rest of the United States. Militarily, the lack of a robust Union Army to combat Pro-Southern sentiment coupled with Confederate plans to annex to the Pacific Ocean put the possibility of losing California a reality. There is an argument that no threat to California from the Confederacy came due to the Confederate loss of the Mississippi River. However, the Confederacy was active in Texas and the rest of the Southwest after the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863. Confederate and Pro-Southern Californians did not discontinue their designs on annexation until almost a year after General Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse. The political and sectional issues affecting the United States in the 1840s and 1850s helped shape how California viewed the Civil War.

Westward expansion after the Mexican-American War brought the issue of slavery to the Pacific coast. Politicians and citizens alike debated how California would be in the Union. Even though California entered the Union as a free state, Southern politicians still had control of the state. The number of Southerners moving to California allowed for Pro-Slavery feelings to linger in the state at the start of the Civil War. The political climate, coupled with the distance from the rest of the country, made many citizens feel that being neutral in the Civil War was a better option to not invite invasion from the Confederacy or military rule from the Union Army. However, Pro-Union Californians principal political offices within California as the Civil War

continued. The new state government would do what it could to assist Washington DC in defeating Confederate incursions into the region.

Due to the majority of the fighting occurring in the East, the Union Army left in California was not equipped to deal with a Pro-Southern movement in California. Union troops needed support from Pro-Union Californians to defend their state. The result was Californians fighting Californians for the stability of the region. During the Civil War, the in-fighting that occurred in California made many politicians in Washington DC nervous about what could happen on the Pacific Coast. However, Pro-Union Californians prevailed over the Pro-Southern Californians. The result was California staying firmly in Union control and assisting with protecting the rest of the region from Confederate threats.