



John C. Frémont



PragerU is redefining how people think about media and education. Watched millions of times every day, PragerU is the world's leading nonprofit with educational, entertaining, pro-American videos for every age. From intellectual, fact-based 5-Minute Videos and powerful personal storytelling to animated shows made just for kids—PragerU helps people of all ages think and live better.

PragerU Kids teaches history, civics, financial literacy, and American values to children across the K-12th grade spectrum. With kids shows, books, and educational resources for every grade, PragerU Kids offers content that parents and teachers trust and children love. Watch for free and learn more at PragerUkids.com.

All text and illustrations Copyright © 2026 Prager University Foundation.

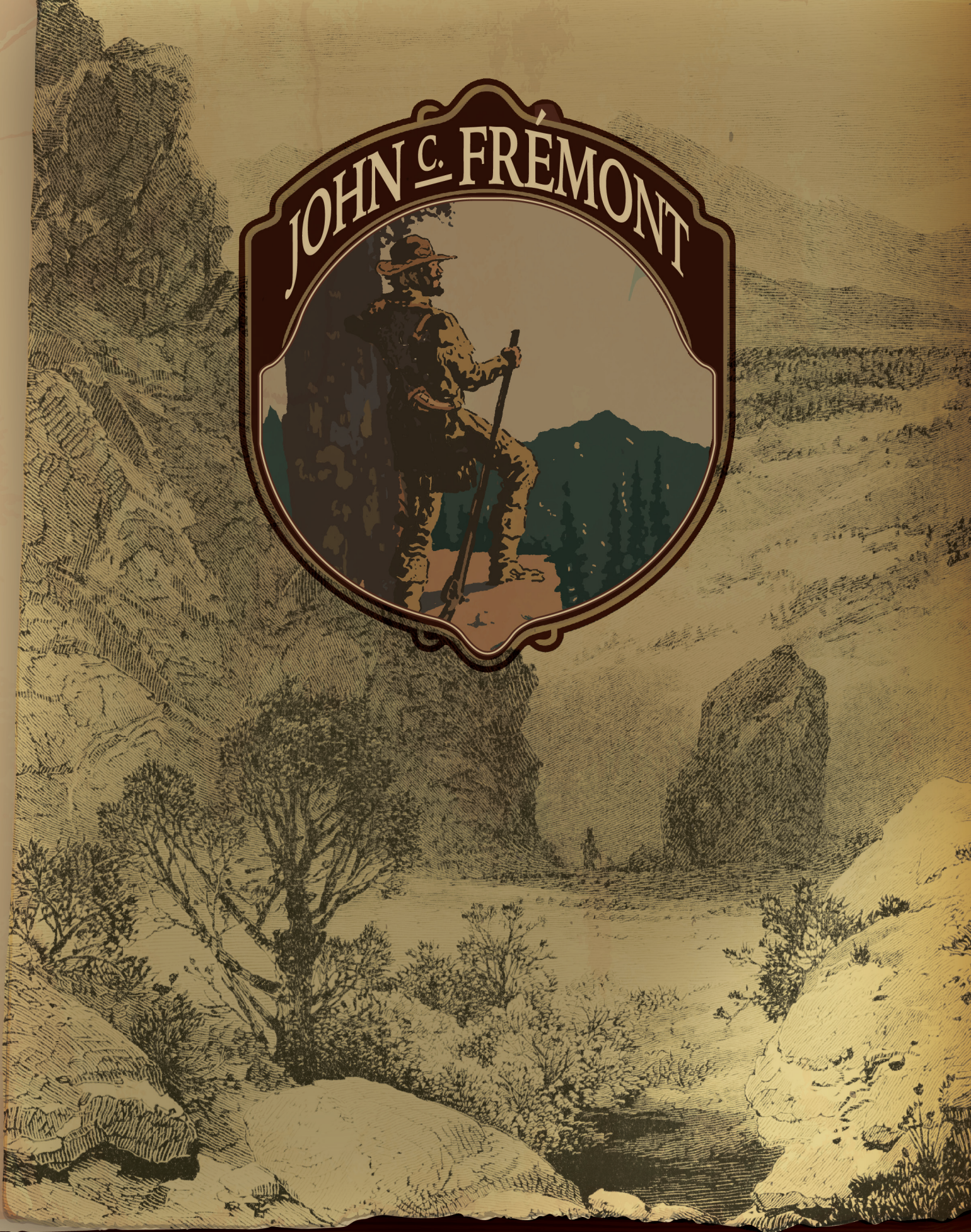
All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

PragerU is a registered trademark of Prager University Foundation.

Published by PragerU

PragerU.com

JOHN C. FRÉMONT





*"The whole valley is glowing and bright,
and all the mountain peaks are gleaming
like silver. Though these snow mountains
are not the Alps, they have their own character of
grandeur and magnificence, and will doubtless find
pens and pencils to do them justice."*

-From John's first expedition report, 1842

The Young Genius

College of Charleston, South Carolina, 1831

John leaned against the window in his teacher's office. He watched the leaves of the tree outside shudder and fall to the ground, only to be trampled by students hurrying to class.

"Mr. Frémont," Dr. Robertson said sharply. "Did you hear me?"

The stern reprimand brought John's senses back to the room. He knew he was in trouble, but he'd talk his way out of it.



"My attendance has been poor, I know," John replied. "But I can catch up in no time. You know I never met a subject I couldn't master."

Dr. Robertson sighed. "You're smart and a quick learner. You've impressed me in your time here, but what good is knowledge if you don't apply yourself?"

"How am I supposed to apply myself inside these walls?" John asked. "The world is waiting. Like all those books I read in your classes, adventure, conquest, and love are waiting out there to be experienced."

Dr. Robertson smiled, remembering their many conversations about these very themes in the Greek and Roman literature he'd assigned John to read. But then his face grew serious. "I'm afraid it's out of my hands. The college has decided to expel you."

John wasn't surprised, nor could he blame them. He mostly regretted letting down Dr. Robertson.

His teacher rose from his desk, accompanied by a sad creak from his wooden chair.

"My boy, I hope you find what you are looking for beyond these walls. Lord knows I did everything I could for you."

John shook his hand. "Thank you, Dr. Robertson."

The teacher's smile returned. "I believe you can do great things for your country, John."

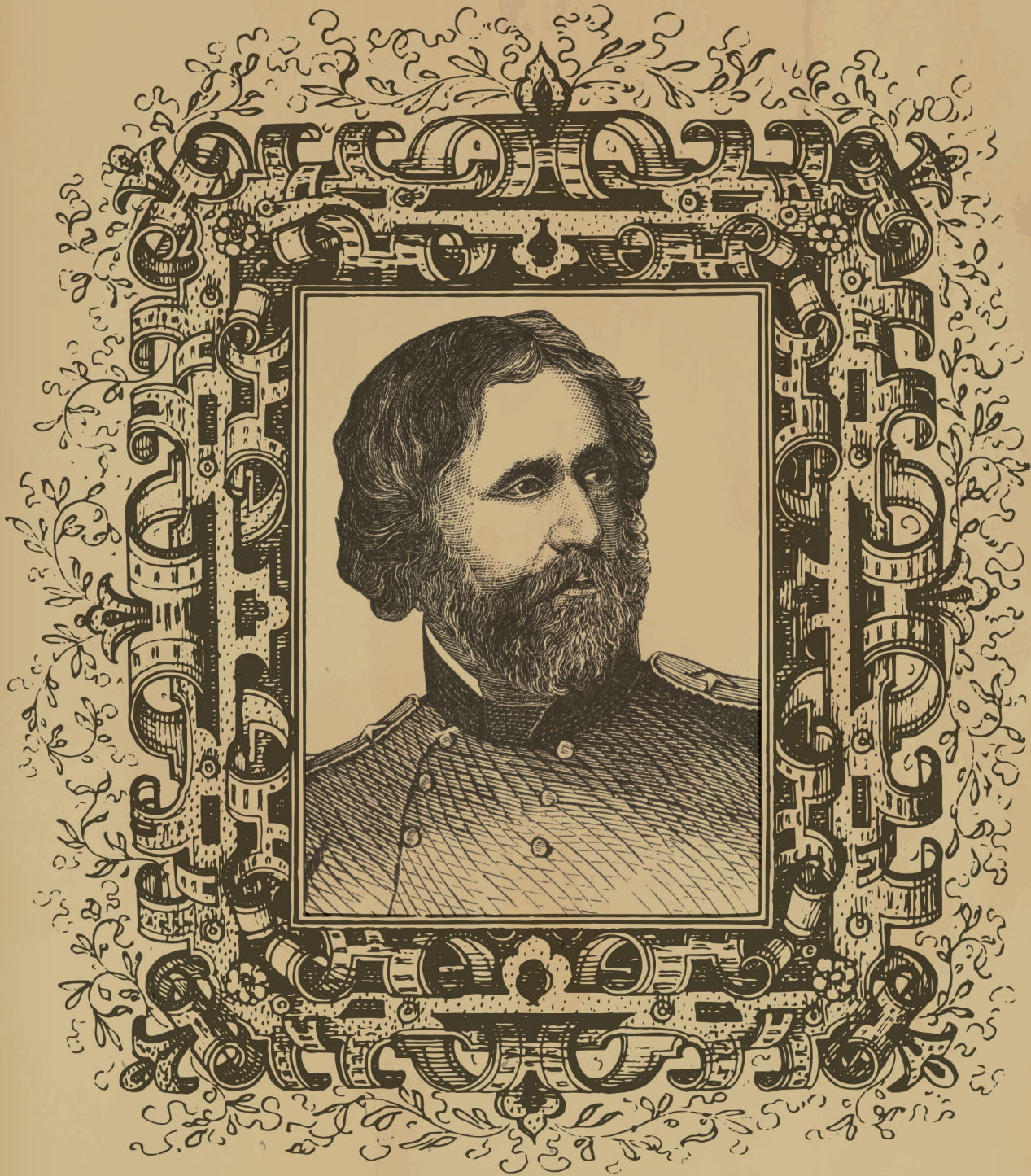
But as John left the school grounds, he wasn't thinking about his country. At least, not yet. The only thought running through the teen's mind was, *I'm free!*

Meet John C. Frémont

John Charles Frémont was many things to his country... an explorer, a math teacher, a military leader, and a politician. It was an impressive career for an expelled academic who didn't come from wealth or privilege. John was born in Georgia in 1813, but his father died when he was only five. His mother, Anne, moved their family to Charleston, South Carolina, where she did her best to find a decent education for little John.

Eventually, John caught the attention of a prominent lawyer who decided to teach him. But, when John needed more time and attention, he was brought to Dr. Robertson at the College of Charleston. The boy was only 16 years old, but his teacher saw the light of genius in him and immediately threw him into his most challenging classes. Over time, John showed an aptitude for literature and math. Shortly before his graduation though, he was expelled for his poor attendance.

John wasn't down on his luck for long. A diplomat and former congressman from South Carolina named Joel Poinsett helped him get a job as a math teacher on a U.S. warship. When he returned from his travels, he was granted multiple degrees from the College of Charleston in 1836. Just two years later, he was **commissioned** by Poinsett once again—this time to the **Topographical Engineers**, as a second lieutenant for the U.S. Army. The group was assigned to survey and map land for the government to find railroad routes to the West.



During this time, John met one of the biggest supporters of American westward expansion, Senator Thomas Benton from Missouri. In 1841, John married the senator's daughter, Jessie. The two would become a power couple—he the explorer and she the promoter—that sold people on the idea of the West. In a time when many believed the frontier to be a harsh, unlivable desert, the Frémonts showed Americans the beauty and plenty of the lands beyond the young nation's existing borders.

1st Expedition: Frémont's Peak

Wind River Mountains (present-day Wyoming), 1842

John saw the summit of the mountain above him, and his heart swelled with excitement. *Finally, almost there.*

His team had come so far, cresting peak after peak, hoping each one to be the last, and John knew with certainty that this was it. Putting his bare hands into the crevices for grip, he climbed the steep rock and sprang over the edge.

"Woahhh!!" He caught his balance just in time. The summit was only a few feet wide, and he'd nearly launched himself over the other side.

He took a moment to soak in the view. The sky was clear and sunny, and he could see countless rivers and lakes spread out in the misty valley below. It was cold, but what took his breath away more than the temperature was the silence. It felt like another world or as if they had stumbled upon the dawn of a new creation where nothing yet lived.

"Everything okay up there?" came the call from below.

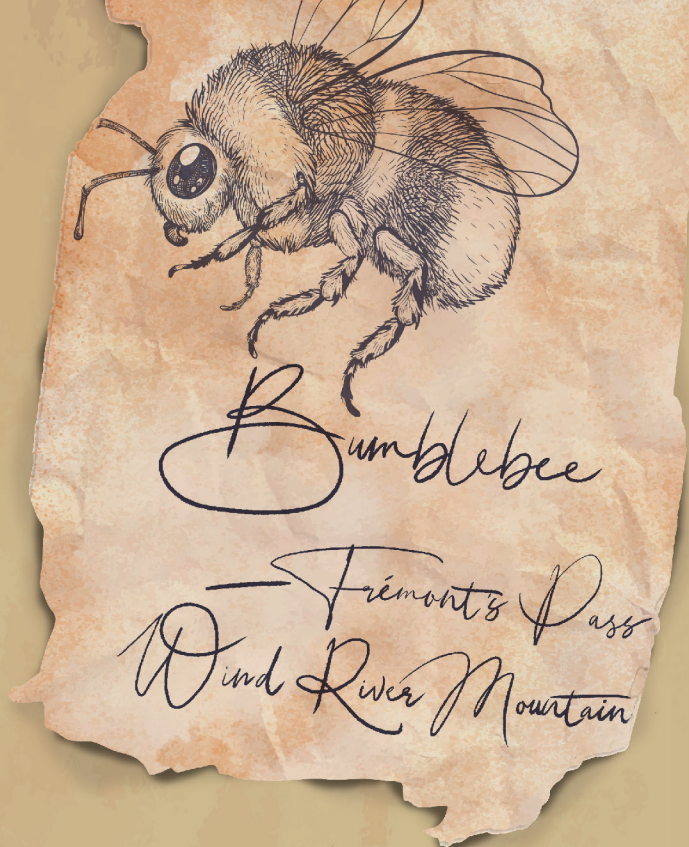
John returned down to his men and let them take their turns, one at a time, on the summit. The wonder of it all made him feel like he was in a dream, but the scientist in him awoke, and he pulled out his **barometer** to measure the atmospheric readings.

"Forty-four degrees Fahrenheit," he said, jotting the number in his journal. "Altitude is 13,570 feet."

"Look!" The men pointed at a solitary bumblebee that landed on someone's knee.



Forty-four degrees
Fahrenheit
Altitude is 13,570 feet



John marveled at the little creature—the only sign of animal life they’d seen yet on these peaks. It was a strange place for a lover of sunshine and flowers, but John imagined the humble bee was like them... a pioneer: the first of his kind to cross the mountain barrier and perhaps the first to fly so high.

He hesitated, then plucked the bee from his crewman’s knee. They needed to study the plant and animal life of the region. John placed the creature in the pages of his journal alongside their plant samples. It was a necessary sacrifice for the science of their mission.

John looked at the sky again. They needed to head back to camp before dark, but he still had one last thing to do. He climbed back up to the narrow summit and planted an American flag in the crunchy snow. It whipped in the wind, and John’s chest swelled with pride.

“For the United States of America!” he shouted.

The men below echoed his chant.

As he stood on the peak, John knew their accomplishment was more than a job completed—it was a defining moment for their country. Everyone on his team felt it—that strong, almost divine pull—that they weren’t just assigned to go... but they were *meant* to go.

And wherever that pull led them next, they would be ready.

Manifest Destiny

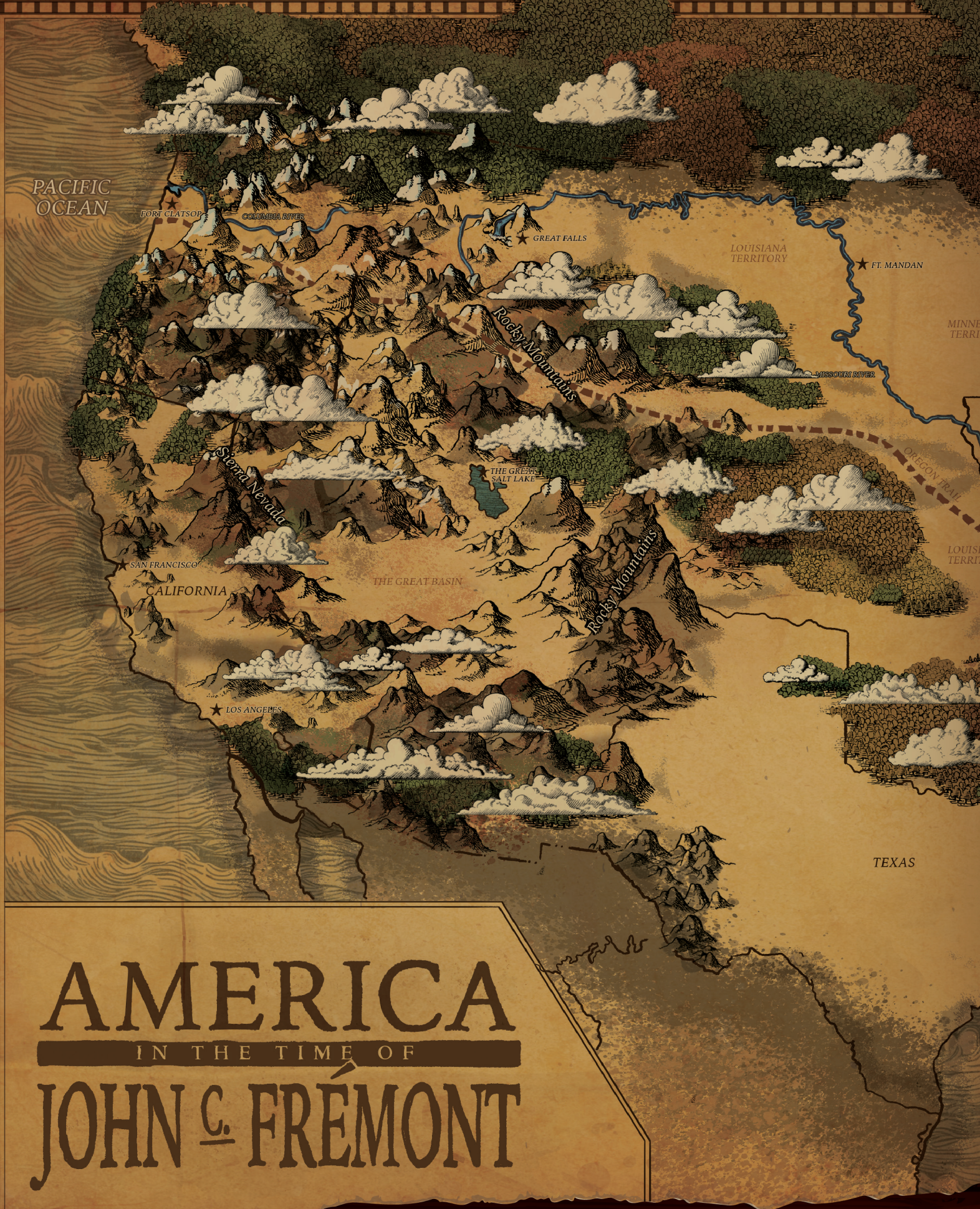
The desire to move west was both a push and a pull for early Americans. With growing families and waves of new immigrants, overpopulation pushed many settlers to find open lands. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 doubled the size of the U.S.'s territory, giving people the chance to stake their claims on new terrain. The land, as many explorers discovered, was beautiful and rich with fertile ground, plant and animal life, and even gold. The pull of the West promised success and wealth for those tough enough to survive the difficult journey. Expansion became inevitable for the eager Americans, almost as if it was their duty or calling to spread across the entire continent. This was their **Manifest Destiny**, a popular phrase that came about much by accident during John Frémont's lifetime.

Manifest Destiny as a term began gaining popularity in 1845, thanks to an article written by newspaper editor John O'Sullivan. His piece was about why the U.S. needed to **annex** Texas. More than that, it was a protest against England and France's interference in American affairs. O'Sullivan believed the Europeans were infringing on Americans' divine right to possess lands across the entire continent.

At first, nobody thought much of the phrase, but soon, it became the rallying cry for the rapid movement west. Those who opposed the idea claimed it was hostile and arrogant. But the obscure newspaper editor had tapped into a long-held American feeling. Ever since their founding, Americans have had their sights set on the West. Moving westward meant more opportunity and a better life. The settlers believed that **Providence**—God's goodwill and blessing—would guide them in their goal to establish democracy and freedom from coast to coast.

Manifest Destiny played a major role in securing Oregon, California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and Texas for the United States. It was an idea so powerful, so rooted in the American spirit, nothing could stand in its way.

John Frémont's expeditions were carried out on the wings of that destiny, whether he knew what the movement was being called or not.



AMERICA

IN THE TIME OF

JOHN C. FRÉMONT





The Pathfinder

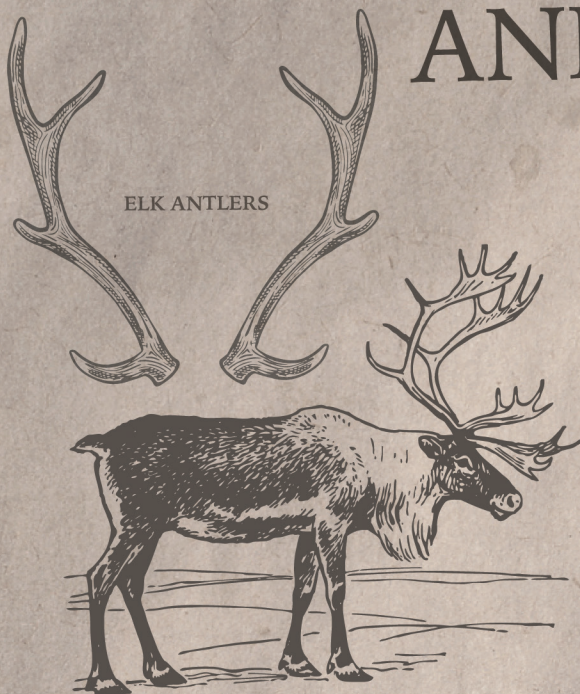
John's first and second expeditions earned him the nickname "The Pathfinder." On these early journeys, John mapped the **Oregon Trail**, the primary east-west wagon route that pioneers used for travel. He successfully made it through the **Rocky Mountains** using the **South Pass**, which was an easier wagon route that passed through the mountain range. He made it to the **Wind River Mountains** in Wyoming, claiming them for the United States. On the second trip, he dared to go even further, exploring the **Great Basin**, the **Great Salt Lake**, and the **Sierra Nevada**.

John's academic studies came in handy as he drew maps, took plant samples, measured atmospheric readings, and even recorded constellations in the sky. Every detail mattered and helped him understand the land better. When he returned home after his trips, his wife, Jessie, would bring his journeys to life. She was a talented writer and helped craft the reports John submitted to the government. The reports were so entertaining that the U.S. Senate allowed them to be published. Newspapers circulated the reports to the public, and it didn't take long for perceptions of the Wild West to change. The West had long been thought of as a barren desert—harsh and unlivable. But John's reports, coupled with Jessie's creative flair, created an almost romantic view of the frontier. Their words were an invitation, even an early advertisement that would lead a new wave of settlers westward.



A FIELD GUIDE TO

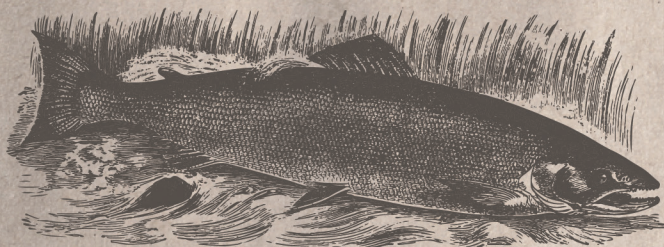
THE ROCKIES ANIMALS



ELK ANTLERS

ELK

The second largest member of the deer family. Males are called bulls and have large antlers, while the females are called cows and do not have antlers. A bull can weigh anywhere from 700 to 1,100 pounds and can run at speeds up to 40 miles per hour! This species likes to roam in herds and can be found in forest and mountain regions of North America and Central Asia.



A fish species that can live in both freshwater and saltwater. Though there are many species of salmon, most have a sleek and streamlined body. Their bodies can change color throughout their lives. They are typically born in freshwater streams, migrate to the ocean, and then return to freshwater near the end of their lives. Salmon are known to be very healthy for the human diet, being high in protein and vitamins. Frémont and his crew ate salmon while on their expeditions out West.



MOUNTAIN GOAT
PERCHED ON PEAK

MOUNTAIN GOAT

Also known as the Rocky Mountain Goat. These mammals have cloven hooves, which make them really great climbers. They are mostly found in remote and rugged mountain regions of western North America. Their thick, wool coats, which range from white to gray, keep them warm at higher altitudes. Both the males and females have beards, a short tail, and long black horns. In the wild, they can typically live for 12-15 years.

SALMON

A FIELD GUIDE TO *THE* ROCKIES PLANTS



PINE TREES

The *Pinus* or pine family of plants includes any coniferous shrub or tree, meaning they produce cones. There are over 100 species of pines, and they are common in the Northern Hemisphere where climates are cooler. They can grow anywhere from 10 to 260 feet tall and live to be very old—from 100 to 1,000 years, sometimes longer! Frémont saw many pines on his expeditions through the mountains and the Northwest.

SAGEBRUSH

A shrub that has a fragrant smell and grows in dry climates such as desert or mountain regions. The bush has many branches with silvery-gray leaves and yellow flowers when in bloom. It provides food to many animals including deer, rabbits, and grouse. In one of his written reports, Frémont described how the bush's dark gray appearance gave the landscape "a gloomy and somber appearance."



FRÉMONT'S COTTONWOOD

A tree named after the explorer himself—*Populus fremontii*. It grows near rivers, streams, or other wetlands in the southwestern United States. The tree can grow from 39 to 115 feet in height. Its leaves are heart-shaped, and in the spring, flower clusters grow that are dispersed by the wind, making it look like cotton hanging from the tree.

A Secret Mission?

After the success of his first two expeditions, John was eager to return to the trails. In 1845, amidst rumors of a coming war with Mexico, the government sent John on another scouting mission. This time, John wasn't the only one pushing boundaries.

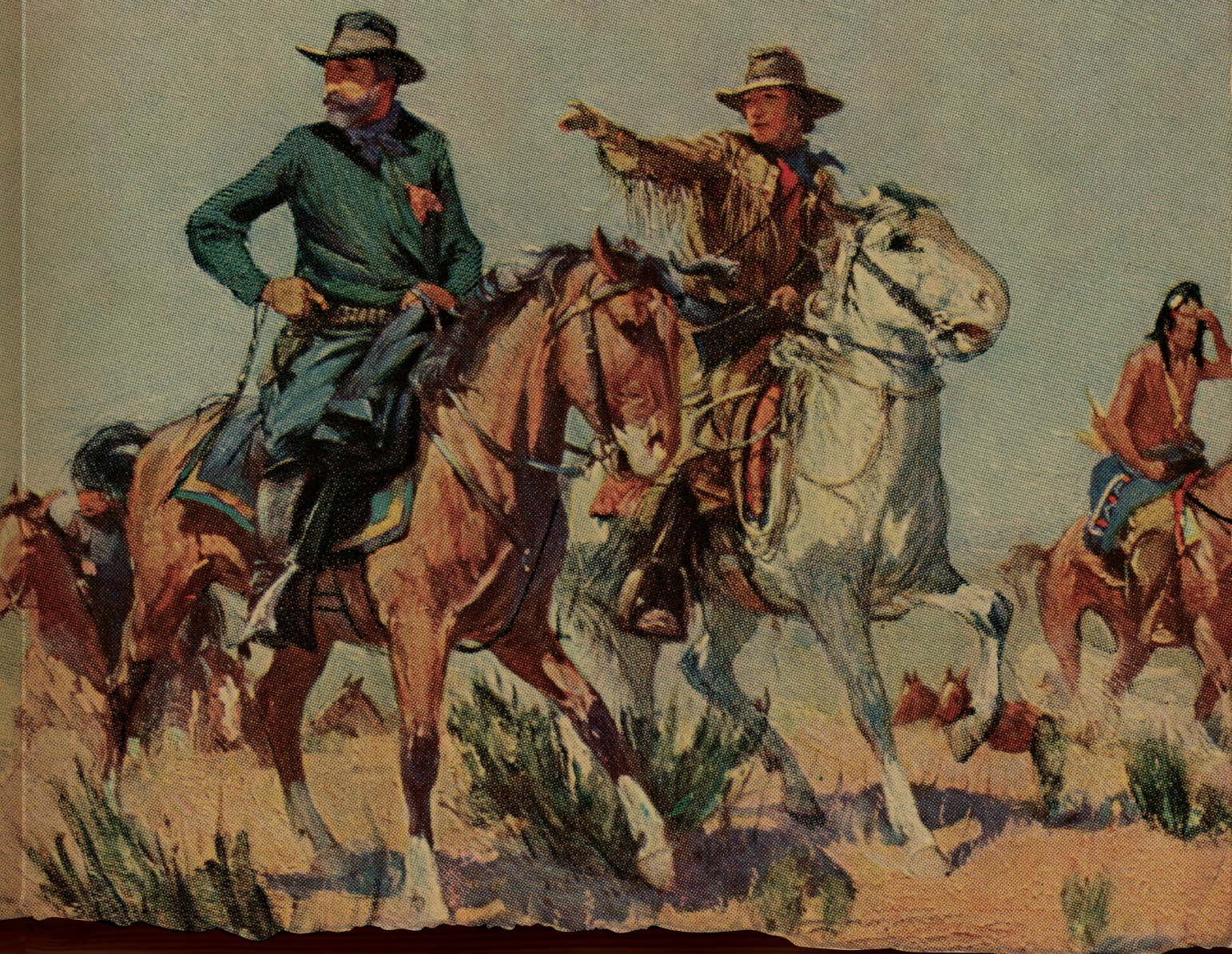
The United States had its eyes set on the northern Mexican territories, including Texas and California. The territories were sparsely populated, and white settlers in those areas wanted freedom from Mexican authority. Rebellion boiled over in Texas, and the Texans declared independence in early 1836. Battles were fought, and Mexican authorities were expelled from Texas, but Mexico still considered the land as theirs and was angry for years. When Texas was admitted to the United States in 1845, it added fuel to the fire. Then, in May of 1846, the U.S. and Mexico got into a dispute over the southern border of Texas, and fighting quickly broke out. The **Mexican-American War** had begun.

John was on his way to California before the war started. His official assignment was scouting a potential railroad route through the Great Basin and into California. However, historians debate whether he was on a secret mission for the president. His top-secret instructions? To encourage the local Californians to rebel and start a war with Mexico. John and his band of skilled men entered California, and when Mexican authorities questioned their intent, they avoided suspicions by claiming they were on a scientific mission through the state. They were ordered to stay in the San Joaquin River Valley, away from the Mexicans. However, John violated this agreement when his crew traveled southwest and set up camp near Monterey. The Americans raised their flag, and Mexican authorities demanded they leave the state.

With the Mexicans gathering troops to move against them, John and his men decided to retreat into Oregon. They ran into more trouble there, clashing with Native American tribes who didn't want U.S. expansion. A few battles were recorded during this time, with most records noting the significant loss of Indian life. Conflicts like this weren't unusual on the frontier, and it went both ways. Indians and settlers alike were victims of brutal attacks during the push for westward expansion.

Meanwhile, American settlers in California were worried. Their land claims from Mexico were at risk. Those who didn't become Mexican citizens could have their land taken away at any time. Rumors spread that Mexico was going to act and that Native Americans were encouraged to burn the settlers' crops. Though their numbers were few, the Americans were ready to rise up.

Around the time the Mexican-American War officially kicked off in Texas, John and his men returned to California. They arrived just in time to support a small group of rebellious settlers in taking over the town of Sonoma. It fell quickly, and the action became known as the **Bear Flag Revolt**.



MANIFEST DESTINY

The American president most associated with Manifest Destiny is James K. Polk, who held the office from 1845 to 1849. Polk, and most Americans of his day, believed adding territory was important and noble because it would spread freedom and bring prosperity to more people. During Polk's presidency, U.S. territory grew by more than a million square miles.

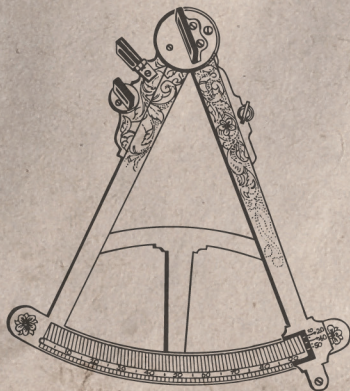


A FIELD GUIDE TO *THE* ROCKIES TECHNOLOGY



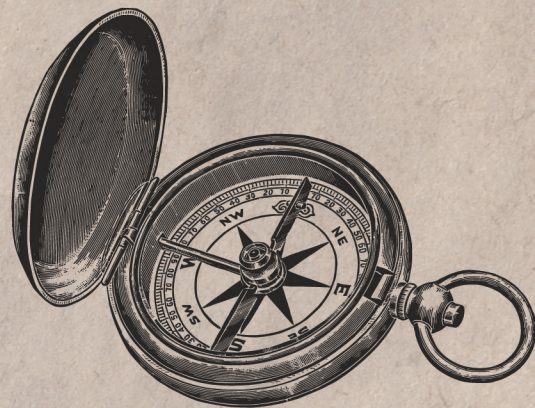
BAROMETER

A scientific instrument resembling a compass that measures changes in air pressure. Frémont used this tool to predict weather patterns and measure altitude or height on his expeditions. A rising barometer signaled good weather, while a dropping barometer meant bad weather was on the way. For altitude, the lower the pressure (meaning thinner air) the higher the altitude, while higher pressure meant lower altitude. At one point, Frémont's barometer broke, and he described in his expedition report the great lengths he went to fix it!



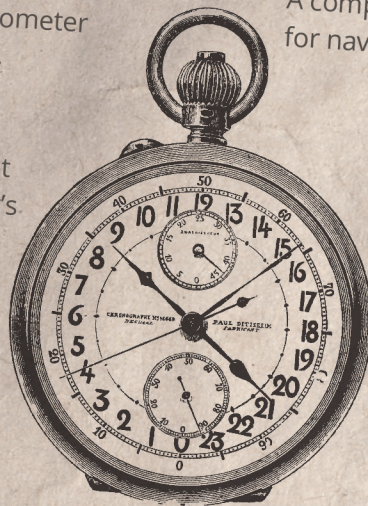
SEXTANT

A navigational instrument that is used to measure the angle between the horizon and a celestial body such as the sun, moon, or stars. It helps determine latitude and longitude. Frémont used this frequently on his expeditions.



COMPASS

A circular device that is used to tell directions such as north, south, east, and west. It works by using a magnetic needle that always points toward magnetic north, or the North Pole. A compass was a key part of Frémont's tools for navigation on his journeys.



CHRONOMETER

A mechanical timepiece, or clock, that had great accuracy and helped people determine longitude while at sea. Frémont mentioned having a chronometer in his detailed report about his expeditions.

A New Flag; A New Republic

Sonoma, California, June 1846

Celebration was in the air, and a party began. John watched as the rag-tag group of rebels raised a new flag over the town. It was nothing more than a white piece of linen with a drawing of a bear facing a lone star.

The men clanked their drinks, making toasts to the new "Republic of California."

John remembered his climb to the peaks of the Wind River Mountains. It felt familiar... planting a flag... sweet victory...

Only this felt almost too easy. His hike up the mountains had pushed him to his physical limits and made him work for the end result.

This rebellion, on the other hand, had happened quickly and smoothly.

The settlers jostled him, and he finally cracked a smile. *Enjoy yourself. This is a victory for the United States. We finally have a foothold on the West Coast.*

"To John!" the men shouted. "We couldn't have done it without you!"

There were already whispers circling that he would be made governor. John felt his doubts slowly melting away. *Leader of the Republic of California. That has a nice ring to it,* he thought.

But John was right to be skeptical. The war wasn't won, not yet.



The End of the Mexican-American War

The Bear Flag Revolt was short-lived, but it paved the way for America's conquest of California and its eventual statehood. The rebels held control of the republic for 25 days before an American military leader, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Joseph Revere, took over San Francisco and then Sonoma. He claimed California for the United States, ending the brief existence of the independent nation. The Bear Flag was replaced with the American flag.

With northern California effectively under American command, the military leaders set their sights on the southern point of power: Los Angeles. Commodore Robert Stockton put Frémont in command, and his battalion moved south, taking city after city. In January 1847, Frémont's troops reached Los Angeles, where he received the surrender of the remaining Mexican forces. John then drafted an agreement called the **Treaty of Cahuenga**, and California was officially under American control.

Commodore Stockton made Frémont the military governor of California, but like the Bear Flag Republic, that title would be short-lived. The Mexican-American War was fought on multiple fronts, and General Stephen Kearny marched into California with his own set of orders from President James K. Polk. The seasoned officer had been instrumental in taking New Mexico. When he arrived and found Frémont in charge, things became tense. Kearny was told to set up a new government, but when John refused to give up his position, Kearny put him in his place. The general arrested him and marched him all the way back to Washington, D.C., to be **court-martialed**.

While the fate of California was secured, John's fate still hung in the balance.

On Trial

Courthouse, Washington, D.C., January 1848

Jessie's hands trembled as she held the latest newspaper. Bold letters screamed out, "Pathfinder's Penalty: Frémont Accused of Insubordination."

Those editors think they are so clever with words, she fumed. Her husband was a hero, not a traitor. Were they so quick to forget all he'd discovered and accomplished? How he'd made them all fall in love with the West and dream of a brighter future?

She crumpled the newspaper. *I'll write you all something worth reading.*

The doors to the courtroom suddenly flung open, and people came pouring out, chattering in a frenzy. She pushed through the crowd to find her husband.

Then, she saw him. Rushing to his side, she tried to regain her composure. "Well?" she asked.

He let out a frustrated sigh. "I was guilty, but we received word that President Polk dropped the charges. He wants me to take up my sword once more for the Army."

Jessie could hear the bitterness in his voice. He was hurt, and she didn't blame him.

"What did you say?"

His reply was cold and emphatic. "I told them they could have my resignation."



Aftermath

Despite the trial and John's resignation, his public popularity and admiration remained strong. John went on another two expeditions, this time financed by himself and his father-in-law. The goal again was to find possible railroad routes to link the East and the West. His 4th expedition ended in failure as a harsh winter in the Rocky Mountains took many of his men and supplies. The 5th expedition, though challenging, provided more valuable information about the region.

The Frémonts settled for a time in California and enjoyed the wealth of the **Gold Rush**, which brought some 300,000 settlers to the territory beginning in 1848. John and Jessie's home estate in California sat on a rich gold vein, and when it was first discovered, John became a multimillionaire.

Things seemed to be turning around for the Frémonts, and John made a shift into the political world. When California was officially admitted as a state in 1850, John was elected as one of its first senators, serving until 1851. Though California joined the Union as a free state, slavery was still an issue affecting the whole country. John was anti-slavery and didn't want it spreading into new territories, and his firm beliefs ultimately cost him his re-election. However, Frémont wouldn't remain in the shadows for long. In 1856, he would make his mark on American history in a new way. That year, he became the first presidential candidate nominated for the newly formed **Republican Party**.



"Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Speech, Free Men, and Frémont"

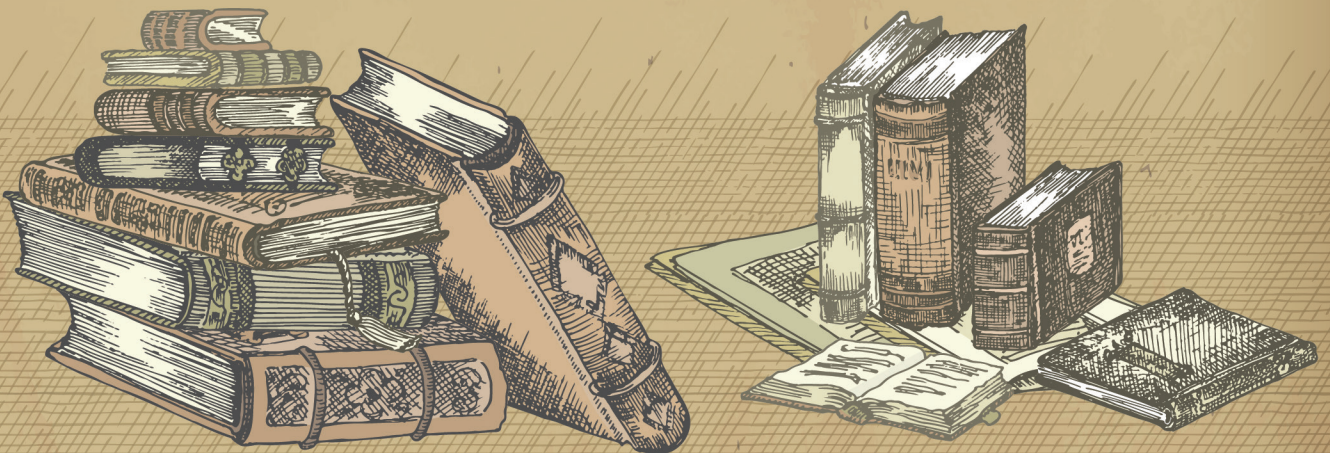
Frémont home in New York, 1856

Jessie felt John's hand on her shoulder, drawing her attention away from her reading. "What is it, dear?" she asked.

"I thought you could use a break. I don't think I've seen you move from your desk in the past two hours," he said. "What are you working on now?"

She sighed. "It's all these biographies people are writing about you. I'm just trying to make sure what people are putting out there for your campaign is accurate. The Democrats want to ruin your reputation any way they can. You should see the wild accusations they're making. They say you're going to tear the Union apart with your radical ideas."

"Oh, I've endured worse," John replied with a smile. He pointed toward the window, to the group of people outside their house. "They seem to like me, at least."



The well-wishers had been coming on and off since the Republican convention announced John as their presidential candidate. They always wanted to hear him speak, but John was firm in remaining out of the public eye. He didn't want to be seen as too ambitious or eager for the presidency. That would be improper.

The chants of the well-wishers came muffled through the walls. "Let us see our Jessie!"

John chuckled, "Seems I was mistaken. They are here for you. It's odd, really. It almost seems like you are running for president, not me. You're doing all the work, after all." He pointed to the stacks of papers and pamphlets on her desk.

"On your behalf, my love," Jessie said, kissing his cheek. "That's what campaign managers are for."

A knock sounded at the door, and John gave her a questioning look. "Who's that?"

"Your team wanted to discuss some more strategies for getting support," she explained. "I promise it won't take long."

The truth was, Jessie couldn't afford to take a break. Not while the odds were stacked against them. She and John knew from the beginning it was a long shot—committing to a brand new party that held an unpopular view on slavery. But they had to keep going, to dig in and see it through to the end. The country was falling apart, and maybe no candidate could keep it together, but she and John had once changed people's minds about the West. If only they could convince America that they were trying to keep the Union together, too.



WHAT IS TOPOGRAPHY

John C. Frémont was part of a group of scientists called topographers, whose job was to study the physical features of the land around them and represent them on a map.

Topographic maps look a little funky! That's because they represent 3-dimensional objects on a flat, 2-dimensional piece of paper. They use contour lines to show the differences in elevation or height of various features, such as mountains.

Take a look at the following example of a mountain and its topographic representation:



HELPFUL HINTS

-  If the lines are close together, then the land is very steep.
-  If the lines are far apart, the land is relatively flat.
-  If you see circles within circles, it's a sign of a hill or mountain.
-  The topographic drawing is like looking down on the land from a bird's eye view, so imagine what the land would look like from high above rather than the side view.

Now, give it a try yourself with this matching exercise!
Match the mountain with its topographic drawing.



Check your answers at the end of the book.

The Republican Party and the Election of 1856

American politics has long been dominated by a two-party system. During much of the 1830s and 40s, those parties were the Democrats and the **Whigs**, but that all changed in 1854 when the Whig Party became divided over the issue of slavery. The party split, with many pro-slavery members moving to the Democrats and the anti-slavery supporters branching off to create the Republican Party.

The slavery issue had reached a breaking point, especially with the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**. This law gave these two new territories **popular sovereignty**, meaning they could decide for themselves whether to be a slave or free state. The result was a violent string of attacks in Kansas as both pro and anti-slavery Americans tried to sway the vote. This tension accelerated the collapse of the Whig Party and paved the way for a new party to rise.

In its early days, the Republican Party's main goal was stopping the spread of slavery. Though they were a small group and much less organized than the Democratic Party, they had solid support from the Northern states, which were growing in population. By the time the 1856 election came around, there was considerable fear among the Democrats that the Republicans stood a chance.

The Southern states were already threatening to **secede** from the Union if a Republican won the election. John C. Frémont was the party's first presidential candidate, which was an interesting choice. Frémont was famous and well-loved for his explorations and his role in settling California. However, he didn't have very much political experience. He did hold anti-slavery views, but he wasn't, by any means, a leader in that arena.

The Democrats ran a long-time, politically experienced man as Frémont's opponent: James Buchanan. He was a Northerner with sympathies for the South, which gave him a strong appeal to both sides. The Democrats did everything they could to undermine Frémont's campaign, but the fearless explorer put up a good fight.

"I would as soon place my children in the midst of smallpox, as rear them under the influence of slavery."

-Jessie Benton Frémont

A Popular Name!

Did you know that many things are named after John Frémont, including counties, cities, schools, hospitals, plants, libraries, and more?

Here are just a few examples:

- ✦ Fremont County in the states of Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, and Wyoming.
- ✦ Fremont Peak in the Wind River Mountains and in Monterey County, California.
- ✦ *Fremontodendron californicum*, the scientific name for the California flannelbush.
- ✦ Fremont City in California, Michigan, Nebraska, and New Hampshire.

With a parent's or librarian's help, research a few other things named after the famous explorer!



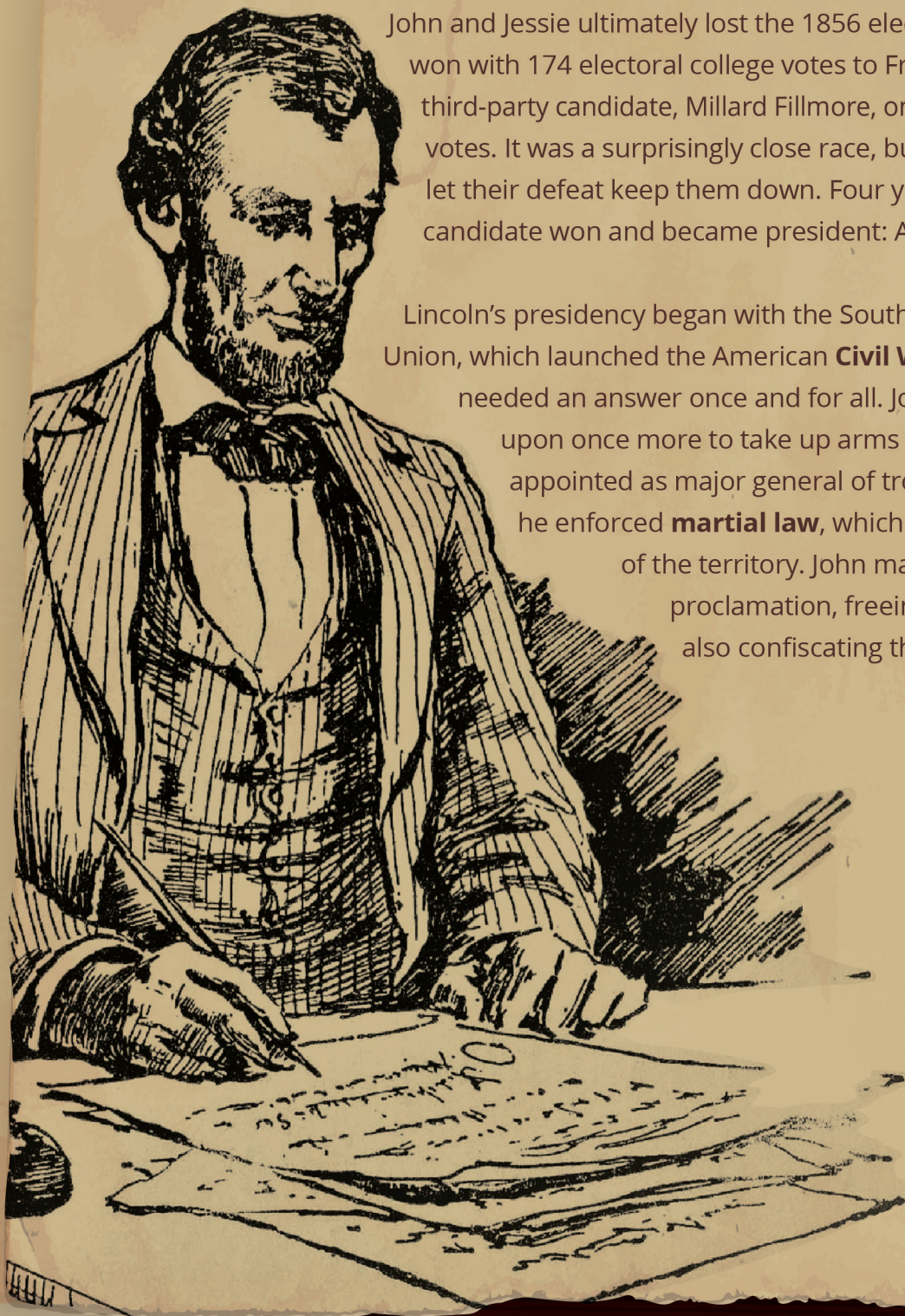
Imagine you are an explorer like John Frémont. Where would you go, and what would you discover? Write a story about your journey, including the challenges you face and the amazing things you find.

Draw a map of your adventure to accompany your story.

A Return to Arms

John and Jessie ultimately lost the 1856 election. James Buchanan won with 174 electoral college votes to Frémont's 114. The third-party candidate, Millard Fillmore, only received eight electoral votes. It was a surprisingly close race, but the Republicans didn't let their defeat keep them down. Four years later, the Republican candidate won and became president: Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln's presidency began with the Southern states leaving the Union, which launched the American **Civil War**. The slavery issue needed an answer once and for all. John Frémont was called upon once more to take up arms for his country. He was appointed as major general of troops in Missouri. In 1861, he enforced **martial law**, which put the military in charge of the territory. John made an **emancipation** proclamation, freeing the state's slaves and also confiscating the property of rebels.



Though Lincoln was anti-slavery, he felt Frémont's actions were too hasty and would further divide the warring country. He demanded that Frémont revoke the proclamation, and when he wouldn't, Lincoln fired him from his command. The following year, he was asked again to be in charge of a command, this time against Confederate General Stonewall Jackson, as he moved through the Appalachian Mountains. John failed to stop his opponent and lost control of his command. Angry and bitter, he resigned from the military for the second time.

Finally, John retired from public life and spent his days seeking railroad opportunities out West. Unfortunately, he lost most of his fortune from poor investments, so his family lived off of the income from Jessie's writing. John briefly served as the Governor of Arizona from 1878-1881. He passed away in New York on July 13, 1890, at the age of 77. Jessie's journey would continue another 12 years without her husband. She continued writing and remained active in the political world on the issues of women's rights and **abolition**. The respected and beloved wife of the famed explorer passed away in her home at the age of 78 in Los Angeles in 1902.



Legacy

John Frémont, America's pathfinder, opened the West in a new way for his fellow countrymen. Though he wasn't the first man to walk the trails he did, he was among the first to change people's minds about the West. His reports gave Americans a new dream, one that would ultimately drive them West on the wings of Manifest Destiny.

Beyond expanding the nation's borders, John was an early supporter of the anti-slavery movement. He was the first major presidential candidate to run with that stance. He helped pave the way not just for settlers to move West, but for all Americans to be free.

Frémont lived the adventures he read about. Now, we read his name on mountain peaks, schools, libraries, and more. We remember what he discovered, but more than that, we remember the curiosity, boldness, and commitment to freedom that defined his service to his country and the people in it.

"Such, my young friends, is but an imperfect sketch of my once beloved and favorite pupil, now a senator, and who may yet rise to be at the head of this great and growing republic. My prayer is that he may ever be opposed to war, injustice, and oppression of every kind, a blessing to his country, and an example of every noble virtue to the whole world."

Dr. Robertson about his student, John Fremont



Glossary

Abolition: Ending or stopping a practice, system, or institution. In the 19th century in the United States, it referred to the elimination of the institution of slavery.

Alps: One of the largest mountain ranges in Europe. It is located in south-central Europe and spans eight countries!

Annex: To take possession of or add territory or a state to a country.

Barometer: An instrument used by scientists to measure changes in atmospheric pressure. With this information, things such as weather and altitude can be determined.

Bear Flag Revolt: A settler rebellion in northern California during the Mexican-American War. It led to the creation of the Bear Flag Republic, or the Republic of California, as an independent nation in 1846. The name came from their flag, which featured a bear facing a lone star. The republic only kept its independence for 25 days before being claimed by the United States.

California Gold Rush: A mass migration of settlers moving west to California to find gold. The migration began when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill on the American River in 1848 and peaked in the early 1850s.

Civil War: The conflict in the United States from 1861 to 1865 between the Union government and the Confederacy, which wanted to break away from the Union and start a new, independent country.

Commissioned: In the military, it means a person has received their rank before starting their role or duty. In a more general sense, it involves being given a formal order or a task to complete.

Court-Martial: A court that tries military members for breaking military law.

Emancipation: The process of being set free from another's control, whether socially, politically, or legally.

Great Basin: A 200,000-square-mile area in North America that includes most of Nevada, half of Utah, and sections of Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, and California. Water drains internally and has no outlet to the ocean or Gulf of Mexico. The water evaporates, absorbs, or goes into nearby lakes. The region's climate is usually hot and dry.

Great Salt Lake: Located in northern Utah, it is the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere.

Kansas-Nebraska Act: A law in 1854 that allowed people living in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide whether to have slavery there. It was based on the idea of popular sovereignty. The law angered people who were against slavery and contributed to the start of the Civil War.

Manifest Destiny: A belief in the inevitable and divine right of American settlers to expand across the entire continent in the 19th century.



Glossary

Martial Law: When the military temporarily takes over control from the civilian government, usually in drastic circumstances such as war, rebellion, or natural disaster. In this situation, the military has final authority over laws and people.

Mexican-American War: A war between the United States and Mexico from 1846 to 1848. The conflict began after a border dispute arose in Texas after its annexation. The Americans ultimately won the war, acquiring over 500,000 square miles of Mexican territory, pushing its borders to the Pacific Ocean.

Oregon Trail: A 2,170-mile route that connected the Missouri River to the Oregon Territory. It was one of two main east-west wagon routes that settlers traveled during the 1840s-1860s.

Popular Sovereignty: The idea from the 1850s in the United States that people should have the choice to allow slavery in the territory in which they live.

Providence: God's care and guidance toward mankind and the world. It has also been used as another title to refer to God.

Republican Party: One of the two major political parties in the United States, alongside the Democrat Party. The Republican Party was formed in the mid-1850s after the collapse of the Whig Party over the issue of slavery. In its early days, anti-slavery was the main issue the party stood for.

Rocky Mountains or "The Rockies": The largest mountain range in North America, comprised of many individual ranges that form a belt stretching 3,000 miles from Canada down to New Mexico.

Secede: To leave an organization or government.

Sierra Nevada: A mountain range in the western U.S. between the central valley of California and the Great Basin. It spans around 400 miles. In Spanish, "sierra" means a range of jagged mountains.

South Pass: A part of the Oregon Trail in modern Wyoming that provided easy passage through the Rocky Mountains. The 20-mile-wide gap with a flat, sloping trail made wagon travel for settlers possible in the 19th-century westward expansion.

Topographical Engineers: A branch of the U.S. Army that existed from 1838-1863 and was tasked with mapping and surveying land in the United States.

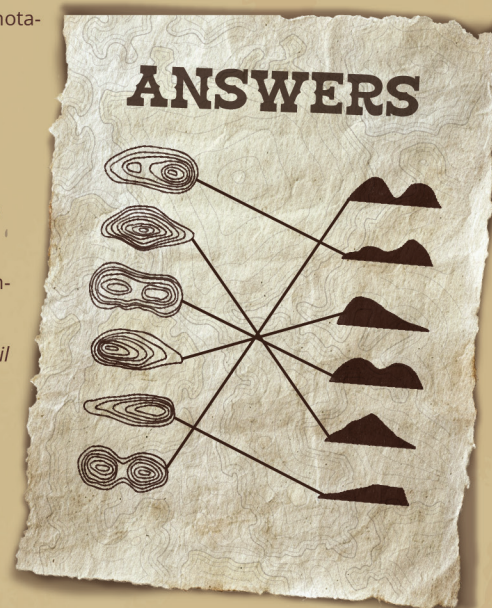
Treaty of Cahuenga: A treaty signed by John Frémont and Mexican authorities in January 1847, which ended the American conquest of California and called for both sides to enter into a ceasefire.

Whig Party: A political party formed in the early 19th century in the United States that opposed Andrew Jackson and supported tariffs and building canals and roads to boost the economy.

Wind River Mountains: One of the many independent ranges that make up the Rocky Mountains. It spans approximately 100 miles and is located in western Wyoming. One of the peaks is named after Frémont to commemorate his explorations there.

Sources

- "1856." *The American Presidency Project*, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/elections/1856. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "1856 Presidential Campaign Slogans." *PresidentsUSA*, <https://www.presidentsusa.net/1856slogan.html>. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "Bear Flag Revolt, June 1846." *National Parks Service*, 6 Sept. 2022, www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/bear-flag-revolt.htm. Accessed 15 June 2024.
- Bicknell, John. *Lincoln's Pathfinder: John C. Frémont and the Violent Election of 1856*. Chicago Review Press, 2017.
- Bicknell, John. "Slavery, Disunion, and the Violent Election of 1856." *Starting Points*, 19 April 2024, startingpointsjournal.com/slavery-disunion-and-the-violent-election-of-1856/. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Bigelow, John, and John Charles Frémont. "Memoir of the Life and Public Services of John Charles Frémont." *Northern Illinois University Digital Library*, digital.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-lincoln%3A37397. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "Buchanan Supporters Attack Presidential Candidate Frémont as a 'Black Republican' Abolitionist." *Seth Kaller, Inc.*, www.sethkaller.com/item/2038-24482-Buchanan-Supporters-Attack-Presidential-Candidate-Fr%C3%A9mont-as-a-%E2%80%9CBlack-Republican%E2%80%9D-Abolitionist. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Denton, Sally. "Frémont Steals California." *American Heritage*, Winter 2011, www.americanheritage.com/fremont-steals-california. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Frémont, John Charles, and John Torrey. *A Report on an Exploration of the Country Lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains: On the Line of the Kansas and Great Platte Rivers*. Printed by Order of the United States Senate, 1843.
- Frémont, John Charles, and Samuel M Smucker. *The life of Col. John Charles Frémont, and his narrative of explorations and adventures, in Kansas, Nebraska, Oregon and California*. New York, Auburn, Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1856. Pdf. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/rc01001190/. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Garrison, Zach. "Frémont, John C." *Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1854-1865. The Kansas City Public Library*, <https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/encyclopedia/fr%C3%A9mont-john-c>. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Heidler, David S. and Heidler, Jeanne T. "Manifest Destiny." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 28 May 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Manifest-Destiny>. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "Jessie Benton Frémont." *AAUW: Columbia (MO) Branch*, <http://columbia-mo.aauw.net/notablewomen/womenfm/jessie-fremont/>. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "John C. Fremont." *New World Encyclopedia*, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/John_C._Fremont#:~:text=Four%20U.S.%20states%20named%20countries,also%20named%20for%20the%20explorer. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "John C. Frémont: The Pathfinder." *Library of Congress*, [www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/january-31#:~:text=Fr%C3%A9mont%20\(1813%2D90\)%2C,orders%20on%20January%2031%2C%201848](http://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/january-31#:~:text=Fr%C3%A9mont%20(1813%2D90)%2C,orders%20on%20January%2031%2C%201848). Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Roos, Dave. "Why the Whig Party Collapsed." *History.com*, 8 January 2021, www.citation-machine.net/mla/cite-a-website/new. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- Snyder, Rachel. "Jessie Benton Fremont: Civil War Stateswoman." *Virginia Center for Civil War Studies*, civilwar.vt.edu/jessie-benton-fremont-the-civil-war-stateswoman/. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "South Pass National Historic Landmark." *Enjoy Your Parks*, enjoyyourparks.com/wyoming/top-things-to-do-in-wyoming/south-pass-national-historic-landmark/. Accessed 19 June 2024.
- "Where Did the Term Manifest Destiny Come From?" *Encyclopædia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/video/226486/origins-Manifest-Destiny. Accessed 19 June 2024.



READY FOR MORE?

Experience all the **FREE CONTENT**
PragerU Kids has to offer!



STREAM FREE SHOWS ON YOUR TV OR TABLET

Download our FREE mobile or TV app to stream every PragerU Kids show! Or, watch any time at PragerUkids.com.



ENJOY HOURS OF FREE SHOWS

Browse over 300 educational videos for K-12, including game shows, cartoons, and inspiring reality shows.



EXPLORE WHOLESOME STORIES & AMAZING HISTORY

Download free e-books at PragerUkids.com or purchase printed copies on Amazon.



FREE RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS & PARENTS

Supplement your child's viewing experience with lesson plans & worksheets that meet educational standards.



ORDER NOW!

Inspiring Biographies

with **Valuable Lessons**

Stories Filled with History & Activities.
Perfect for Middle Readers 3rd-5th Grade!



Experience Fun,
Interactive, and
Educational Content
at **PRAGERUKIDS.COM**