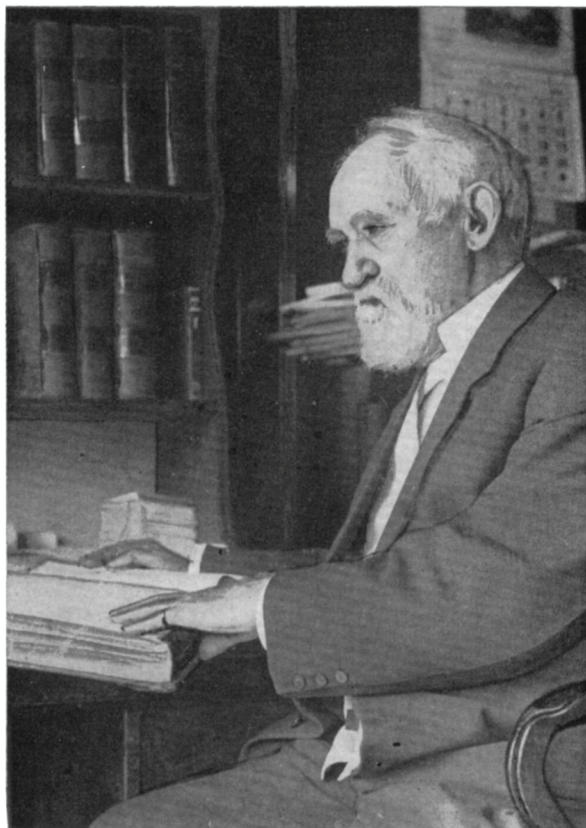


COLONEL E. D. BAKER



U. S. SENATOR CORNELIUS COLE

*He and Edward D. Baker were responsible for the
formation of the Republican Party in 1856.*

LINCOLN AND BAKER:

The Story of a Great Friendship

By Edward A. Dickson

Former Publisher, Los Angeles Express



ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LIFE WAS his great friendship for Edward Dickinson Baker—*Colonel Baker*, if we choose to think of him as a soldier; *Senator Baker*, if we recall his stirring speeches in the country's hour of peril; or "*California's Baker*" — the strong bond that connected Lincoln with California.

As a warrior, Edward Baker served his country *first* in the Black Hawk War; *then*, in the war between the United States and Mexico; and *finally* in the Civil War, where he was mortally wounded in battle while leading his heroic California battalion.

As a statesman, Baker served in the Illinois Legislature, then in the lower house of Congress; then in the United States Senate — always defending with his matchless eloquence the integrity of the nation.

BAKER IN CALIFORNIA

It is no exaggeration to say that no man exercised a greater influence on the political life of California than Edward Baker. Thomas Starr King contributed mightily to the Union cause, but his was a brief service. King did not arrive in California until the middle of 1860—just a few months before Lincoln's election; and he died four years later. Baker, on the other hand, came to California in 1852. He travelled over the state from one end to the other, everywhere pleading the cause of the Union. It was Baker who for nearly a decade fought incessantly against the powerful

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

forces that were striving desperately to drag California into the whirlpool of secession.

Yet, the name of Edward Baker today is almost unknown—all but erased by the unchecked erosion of time. One writer a year or so ago, referred to Baker as “Lincoln’s forgotten friend.”

A number of years ago, I had an interesting talk about Edward Baker with California’s honored patriarch, Cornelius Cole. Senator Cole, himself, was a highly interesting character; and, of course, an authority of early California. Born in 1822, he lived a rugged and useful life for 102 years, passing away in Los Angeles in 1924. It is interesting to reflect that while he was our own contemporary, he had lived during the life-time of every President of the United States with the exception of George Washington. Presidents Adams and Jefferson died in 1826, so Cole had lived for four years during their lifetime.

Cole had come to know Baker intimately, and Baker told him of his frequent letters to and from Lincoln — and of Lincoln’s grave concern about the two Pacific states, California and Oregon. The venerable senator described Baker to me as the man who had contributed most to the anti-slavery movement in California; the man to whom the Republican party in California owed its origin.

“Baker,” Senator Cole told me, “was really the father of the Republican party in this state.”

TWO YOUNG LAWYERS

But — back to the Lincoln-Baker friendship. To trace that friendship, let us go back to the year 1836, when young Lincoln, then 27 years of age, and leading a lonely life at New Salem, tucked his treasured copy of Blackstone into a saddlebag, which contained his few worldly possessions, and set out for Springfield—there to begin his career as a lawyer.

A few days after his arrival in Springfield, an advertisement appeared in the local newspaper, announcing the formation of a new law firm—that of “Stuart and Lincoln.”

Curiously enough, the same newspaper carried another law advertisement—the card of the law firm of “Logan and Baker.”

Lincoln and Baker: The Story of a Great Friendship

Those two advertisements tell an interesting story. Both Lincoln and Baker were junior members of their respective firms in this midwestern village, and each was just entering upon a career at the bar that was destined to lead to national greatness—one to the United States Senate; the other to the Presidency.

Baker was two years younger than Lincoln, with great promise because of his rare command of oratory and his distinguished personal appearance. The two young Springfield lawyers early became warm friends, although on one occasion they were competitors for the Whig nomination to Congress — and Baker won.

On another occasion, when the new state capitol at Springfield was to be dedicated, a citizens committee canvassed a list of local speakers from which to select the orator of the day. Among the names considered were those of Stephen A. Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, Judge Logan and Baker. Baker was the unanimous choice.

When the firm of "Stuart and Lincoln" was dissolved some four years later, Lincoln was invited by Judge Logan to become his junior associate, young Baker having withdrawn to practice independently. The firm's name was changed from "Logan and Baker" to "Logan and Lincoln," an association that was to continue until Lincoln began his partnership with Herndon several years later.

Both Lincoln and Baker had been members of the Illinois Legislature, and both subsequently represented the Springfield district in Congress. Each was an active opponent of slavery. An evidence of their close friendship is the fact that Lincoln named his second son Edward Baker Lincoln.

BAKER GOES TO WAR

When the United States became involved in the war with Mexico in 1848, Congressman Baker promptly resigned his seat in Congress, volunteered his services with the armed forces, and made a record for gallant performance.

The war over, Baker returned to Springfield, where he and Lincoln followed with solicitude the efforts of California—acquired

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

as a result of the Mexican War — to secure admission into the Union as a free state.

There were at that time, it will be recalled, fifteen free states and fifteen slave states. California, as the thirty-first state, would upset the fifteen-fifteen balance.

So when California was admitted in 1850, with a constitution prohibiting slavery, there was general rejoicing throughout the North. Henceforth, so it was assumed, there would be sixteen "free" states.

Lincoln and Baker early discovered, however, that the victory for the North was a definitely hollow one. Of the two senators initially elected from California — one Frémont, was a Whig; the other, Gwin, a Southern pro-slavery Democrat. Then, Frémont, at the end of his short, two-year term, had not been re-elected, so his seat in the United States Senate was filled by another Democrat, in full sympathy with the Southern cause.

Thus, the so-called "free state" of California was actually represented at Washington by two pro-slavery senators. And to add to the chagrin of the Northerners, the two California Congressional Representatives were likewise Democrats — and pro-slavery.

FIGHT FOR CALIFORNIA

Lincoln and Baker realized only too clearly what had happened. California, for whose acquisition Baker had fought valiantly in the Mexican War, had become, in reality a strong addition to the pro-slavery South. Lincoln and Baker earnestly pondered this unhappy turn of affairs. They agreed that California must be won back. Baker felt that it could be, and proposed that he take up residence in the new state, with that end in view. Lincoln reluctantly agreed, and Baker soon left Springfield for California.

Baker arrived in San Francisco early in 1852. So this year we are observing the centennial of his arrival in California. Baker opened a law office in that frontier city, and was soon absorbed in the complex problems of the new state.

While the dominant sentiment in California was pro-slavery, Baker felt sure that the Democrats were not as numerous as their

Lincoln and Baker: The Story of a Great Friendship

political superiority would seem to suggest. This had been indicated by the vote for governor at an election held the year before. Bigler, Democratic candidate for governor, had defeated his Whig opponent, Reading, by barely a thousand votes, out of a total of 44,000 votes cast.

What was lacking was leadership. Baker found that with the exception of a man named Cornelius Cole, editor of a small newspaper at Sacramento, there appeared to be a complete absence of leadership in California to voice the views of the anti-slavery minority. So Baker hunted up Cole, and from that alliance sprang the movement to organize the Republican party in California.

Cole had come to California two years before Baker. Born in New York, he had studied law in the office of William H. Seward, one of the outstanding national anti-slavery leaders, and later Lincoln's rival for the presidential nomination. From Seward, Cole had acquired a deep-seated abhorrance of the evils of slavery.

REPUBLICAN PARTY FORMED

At Baker's suggestion, Cole undertook to assemble a group of men at Sacramento, to organize the Republican party. On his printing press, Editor Cole set up a form of birth certificate for the new party. The date of organization, as shown on that certificate, was March 8th, 1856. Membership was not large, but it did contain the names of several men who later became illustrious in the history of California—Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins and Charles Crocker.

A month later, the first mass meeting of the Republicans was held at Sacramento. Menacing Democrats, and not a few rabid pro-slavery Whigs, intruded, and the meeting ended in an uproar. Attendance at such political gatherings called for physical courage. Despite threats of violence, however, Baker and Cole proceeded with their plans of organization. Accordingly, a Republican state convention assembled several days later in one of the Sacramento churches.

But only 125 delegates answered to the roll-call, sixty-five of

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

whom came from San Francisco. Only thirteen counties out of a total of forty had mustered enough enthusiasm or courage to send delegates.

Nevertheless, a resolution demanding prohibition of slavery in all Territories of the United States was adopted with vociferous applause. Delegates to the Republican party's first national convention were also selected. Included in that list were Crocker, Huntington, Hopkins and Cole.

Within a month, Baker and Cole had an active campaign in full swing. It was launched by a public debate at Sacramento between a leading Republican and a leading Democrat. The slavery element was again on hand to create a disturbance, and fights were numerous in an effort to break up the meeting. The Democrats gained control of the speakers' stand, assumed charge of the meeting, and proceeded to adopt a resolution declaring that the city had been outraged by "Black Republicans," and that the citizens of Sacramento would not again submit to a similar offense.

CAMPAIGNS WERE BITTER

Despite the bitterness of the opposition, Baker and Cole and their Republican cohorts again met, and decided to make a test of strength at the November election. Their convention ratified the nomination of Frémont, who had been named by the newly created national Republican party as its standard bearer. The convention adopted the slogan, "Freedom, Frémont and the Railroad."

A slight conception of the resentful feeling that existed may be gleaned from the following write-up of the state Republican convention, which appeared in the *Sacramento State Journal*:

"The convention of Nigger worshippers assembled yesterday in this city. *Ecce Signum!* This is the first time that this dangerous fanaticism has dared to bare its breast before the people of California. Heretofore, it has skulked in dark corners, denied its own identity, and kept in the background. It is high time that all national men should unite in saving California from the stain of abolitionism."

Baker and other able speakers campaigned actively for the

Lincoln and Baker: The Story of a Great Friendship

new party's ticket, but at the general election in November, the Democratic ticket was victorious, as usual. For president, Buchanan, Democrat, carried California, with nearly as many votes as the combined vote cast for the American party candidate, Fillmore, and the Republican candidate, Frémont.

PLANNING FOR 1860

The next two years were gloomy ones for Baker and Cole. Nevertheless, in 1859, their Republican party nominated a full ticket for state offices, with Leland Stanford as their candidate for governor. Baker's own name had been presented as the nominee for governor, but he had withdrawn in favor of Stanford.

In the interim, a serious split had occurred within the Democratic party nationally, and this schism was at once reflected in California. President Buchanan headed the faction which resisted any compromise on the current slavery issue, while Senator Stephen A. Douglas, supported by Northern Democrats generally, led a stubborn opposition.

In California, Democratic leaders quickly took sides. Democratic Senator Gwin supported Buchanan, while Democrat David C. Broderick, recently elected senator, espoused the stand taken by Senator Douglas. In California, therefore, as throughout the nation, hostilities were precipitated between the administration Democrats and the Douglas Democrats.

Horace Greeley, who, as editor of the *New York Tribune*, was a formidable opponent of slavery, was warmly supporting Douglas, and urged Republicans throughout the nation to throw their strength to Douglas as a means of securing victory on the tempestuous slavery issue. Advised that a gubernatorial election was to be held in California, Greeley had come west, and addressed a gathering at Placerville. He pleaded for a merger between the Republicans and the Douglas Democrats in the pending state election.

There were three candidates in the contest for governor: Milton S. Latham, nominated by the Buchanan Democrats; John Cur-

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

rey, nominated by the Douglas Democrats; and Leland Stanford, nominated by the Republicans.

Greeley urged Stanford to withdraw in favor of Currey, the Douglas Democrat, but his plea was rejected. Stanford realized that a victory for the Republicans was hopeless, but he and his advisors felt that their party should be kept intact, so as to be ready for the big national election that was now looming for 1860.

A merger was effected, however, in the contest for Congress. California at that time had two members in the lower house, each elected by the voters of the entire state.

Greeley suggested to the Republicans that they draft Edward Baker for one of the two congressional positions, and unite behind a Douglas Democrat for the other, in return for the support of Baker by the Douglas Democrats.

DEFEATED FOR CONGRESS

Baker accepted the draft, and became the joint candidate of the Douglas Democrats and the Republicans.

As had been predicted, the administration Democratic ticket was successful, Latham winning over Currey and Stanford by a substantial majority.

Baker, however, while defeated, made a surprising showing. His vote was more than four times that cast for Stanford, head of the Republican ticket.

The result of the election, while again demonstrating the supremacy of the Buchanan Democrats, still further widened the breach between the two Democratic factions. Thus was paved the way for a Republican success in the presidential election the following year, as predicted by Stanford.

A tragic outcome of the bitter Democratic strife was the death of Senator Broderick, nine days after the 1859 election, when he was killed in a duel with Judge Terry. It was generally recognized that the killing of Senator Broderick was the direct result of his feud with the Buchanan-Gwin Democrats over the issue of slavery. His death had immediate national repercussions. Baker,

Lincoln and Baker: The Story of a Great Friendship

chosen to deliver the funeral oration, rendered an inspired eulogy over the grave of the martyred senator. A year later, at Baker's suggestion, a large portrait of Broderick was hung at the rear of the stage in the Wigwam convention hall where Lincoln was nominated for President. It added a great solemnity to the proceedings.

ELECTED SENATOR

And now occurred a new chapter in the life of Edward Baker. Toward the end of 1859, he received a call from Oregon to come to that state, and become the Republican candidate for United States Senator.

Oregon, like California, was a Democratic stronghold. Nevertheless, Lincoln urged Baker to accept the challenge. He would have a slim chance, but the situation was crucial. Both Cole and Stanford likewise advised Baker to make the effort, unpromising as it was. The need for someone in the United States Senate to voice the views of the Pacific Coast was paramount. Baker finally yielded. He left for Oregon early in 1860, and after a short but electrifying campaign was, to the amazement of everyone, elected United States Senator.

In the interim, the California Republicans assembled at Sacramento for the purpose of selecting the California delegates to the 1860 Republican national convention. The great majority of the convention was for William H. Seward of New York for President, and a delegation enthusiastically pledged to him was chosen.

Seward's popularity with the California Republicans was due in large measure to the fact that Cornelius Cole had studied law in Seward's office. After coming to California, Cole had been in frequent correspondence with Seward, and kept him advised as to the political developments in this state. Naturally, Seward was Cole's choice for the presidential nomination.

Also, there were at least three other Republican leaders who hailed from Seward's native state of New York. These were Stanford, Hopkins and Crocker. It is easy to see how the resolution pledging California to Seward was adopted, supported as it was by

that strong group of former New Yorkers. Besides, Lincoln was little known in California, and Baker was unable to be present at the convention, due to his campaign in Oregon.

LINCOLN IS NOMINATED

The Republican national convention met at Chicago—May 17, 1860. To the shocked surprise of the California delegation, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was chosen as the party's nominee for President on the third ballot. The collapse of the Seward boom was a severe disappointment to the California delegates, who persisted in voting for him on all three ballots.

When news of the nomination of Lincoln and Hamlin reached California, the Republicans assembled at Sacramento to ratify the party's choice. Harmony prevailed and the following resolution was adopted:

"Abraham Lincoln, of the great West, is the appropriate representative of the great principles of the Republican party, the fit opponent of the sectional, factional, dissonant, and disordered 'Democracy'. Known at home as 'Honest Old Abe' — the sturdy champion of freedom and justice — we commend him to the free voters of this state as a man possessing alike the genius to will and the courage and determination to maintain, at all hazards, the integrity of the Union, and the honor of the government."

The presidential campaign in California opened in a burst of fury and excitement. Four candidates were in the field—John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky, candidate of the administration Democrats; Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, candidate of the Douglas Democrats; Abraham Lincoln, Republican party candidate; and John Bell of Tennessee, of the Union Constitutional party.

Chief interest, of course, centered on the race between Breckenridge, Douglas and Lincoln. Douglas supporters were particularly active, and "Little Giant Clubs" were organized all over the state. "Wide Awake Clubs" — in the interest of Lincoln — made up in energy for what they lacked in numbers. Torch-light processions were weekly manifestations of party spirit, and huge transparencies gave color to the marching supporters of the various party candidates.

Lincoln and Baker: The Story of a Great Friendship

Some conception of the ferment at work can be gleaned from a speech delivered by Former Governor Weller, a supporter of Breckenridge, shortly before the end of the campaign. During the course of his vitriolic address, Weller said:

“I do not know whether Lincoln will be elected or not; but I do know that if he is elected, and attempts to carry out his doctrine, the South surely will withdraw from the Union, and I should consider them less than men if they did not.”

At the state Democratic convention, one of the ultra-bellacose members, Edmund Randolph, denounced Lincoln and his policy of using force to suppress the rebellion; he ended his tirade with these words:

“To me it seems a waste of time to talk . . . for God’s sake speed the ball; may the lead go quick to his heart, and may our country be free from this despot usurper that now claims the name of the President of the United States.”

BAKER’S GREAT SPEECH

Several days before the close of the campaign, Baker, now senator-elect of Oregon, en route by steamer to assume his post at Washington, stopped off at San Francisco and was chief orator at the closing rally in support of Lincoln. He arrived in late October, and was welcomed with a salute of guns as his ship entered the harbor. An immense crowd had come to greet him, escorting the Senator in triumph to his hotel. Ardent Republicans came from Stockton, San José, Sacramento and Marysville to hear him. “Wide Awake” clubs paraded, cannon were fired, bands filled the air with stirring music. More than 4,000 filled the American theater to its very walls.

Senator-elect Baker was a man of commanding appearance. Prematurely grey and partially bald, he had a florid complexion, a pronounced roman nose and short side-whiskers. He was handsome and forceful, looking every inch the “the Grey Eagle,” as he was affectionately called. His voice was magnetic and finely modulated.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Baker knew that in all probability a very few votes would determine the forthcoming election in California. He poured his whole soul into that closing appeal on behalf of Lincoln.

The speech he gave was brilliant, and his audience was aroused and thrilled by it.

One incident will illustrate—Bret Harte, then a young San Francisco reporter, had been sent to cover the meeting by a local paper. His emotions were so stirred by Baker's exhortation, that he rushed into the street, frantically waving his hat and shouting to everyone within earshot to hurry in to hear "the greatest orator in America."

California's historian, Hittell, declared Baker's speech the most eloquent ever delivered in California.

During the remaining eleven days before the election, Baker's magnificent speech was on everyone's lips. In the election that followed, Lincoln carried California, by a thin margin; that winning margin was easily accounted for by Baker's superb address.

LINCOLN WINS CALIFORNIA

Election day dawned—November 6, 1860—with all California tense with uncertainty. As returns began to come in, suspense increased hourly. In the South, Breckenridge's lead was so heavy that the rumor early spread that he had won California, and there was premature rejoicing among his supporters.

In the North, however, early returns showed Douglas leading — with corresponding elation on the part of his followers. But, gradually, Lincoln votes began to pile up, particularly as returns came in from San Francisco. So close was the vote among the three candidates in California that results could not be announced until the last returns were received from Southern California. With votes from all over the state counted, the results gave California's electoral vote to Lincoln.

Lincoln	38,733
Douglas	37,999
Breckenridge	33,969
Bell	9,111

Lincoln and Baker: The Story of a Great Friendship

In Los Angeles county, Lincoln ran a poor third, the vote being—

Breckenridge	703
Douglas	494
Lincoln	356

Los Angeles was obviously Southern soil.

There was added rejoicing in California when word came down from the north that Oregon, too, had swung into the Lincoln column—though by an exceedingly close vote. The Lincoln victory there also was due almost entirely to Baker, who while conducting his own successful campaign for senator, had spread widely the fame of his honored personal friend, Abraham Lincoln.

The victory in Oregon was especially remarkable because of the fact that U. S. Senator Joseph Lane of Oregon was Breckenridge's running mate for vice-president. Lane lost his home state, due to Baker's amazing campaign.

And as California and Oregon went, so went the nation. Lincoln was elected president.

INTRODUCES LINCOLN AT INAUGURAL

At Washington, on March 4, 1861, a vast throng assembled to greet the newly chosen head of the nation. In Lincoln's carriage, on its way up Pennsylvania avenue to the capitol, was Senator Baker, who sat facing the president-elect, smiling with deep emotion at the demonstration that marked Lincoln's hour of triumph. Then, at the inauguration ceremony, Senator Baker, at Lincoln's personal request, accompanied him to the platform, and presented Lincoln to the American people.

" . . . AND FELL IN BATTLE"

After having introduced President Lincoln at the inauguration, Baker proceeded to help President Lincoln win the war that was now inevitable. He laid aside his senatorial toga, took on the uniform of a soldier, headed a force known as the California Battalion,

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

led that battalion in a gallant charge at Ball's Bluff—and fell in battle. He gave the last full measure of devotion to his country.

Colonel Baker's body was brought back to California, which he loved so dearly, and was buried at Lone Mountain Cemetery in San Francisco.

Over his grave, Thomas Starr King spoke these closing words in tribute to Abraham Lincoln's closest friend—

“Warrior and statesman; wise in council . . . but nobler . . . in the devotion which prompted thee to give more than thy wisdom, more than the fervor of thy tongue . . . even the blood of thy indomitable heart when thy country called with a cry of peril.

“We receive thee with tears — and pride. We receive thee to reverence and gratitude, as we lay thee gently to thy sleep; and we pledge to thee not only a monument that shall hold thy name, but a memorial in the hearts of a grateful people so long as the Pacific moans near thy resting place.”

