

When Californians Were Heroes

by Andrea Ingraham

Jan. 8—Unlike the dismal state of California politics today, where no one from either political party has challenged the genocidal policies and outlook espoused by Jerry Brown and Barack Obama, California politics was not always that way. During the first decade of its statehood, California politics was characterized by a life-or-death battle over slavery and the union, and the effort to civilize and uplift the population.

A state constitution which included a ban on slavery was submitted to Congress in 1849. For nine months a war in Congress ensued, as the southern Senators refused to upset the balance of 15 slave- and 15 free-states. A compromise crafted by Henry Clay resulted in California's admission on Sept. 9, 1850, avoiding civil war for the moment, but the slavocracy had by no means surrendered.

The leader of the Slave Power faction in California was William McKendree Gwin, a slave owner from Mississippi and protégé of Andrew Jackson; he was elected as one of the state's two first Senators. Gwin was determined to run the Democratic Party in the state, and under the Pierce Administration, he became controller of the patronage, giving him great power in the Party. His minions in the State legislature promoted many schemes, such as a bill to exclude free blacks from the state, a tough fugitive slave law, a bill to impose a stiff tax on foreign miners, a bill to legalize Chinese coolie contract labor, and a scheme to split the state in two, creating a southern California territory open to slavery.

In the U.S. Senate, Gwin and his colleague voted consistently with the southerners. By the end of the decade, on the eve of the Civil War, there was a strong sentiment that if the southern states seceded from the Union, California should secede and "form a separate republic."



Library of Congress

California Congressman David C. Broderick

Gwin's nemesis was a fierce fighter from Manhattan, New York named David Broderick. Broderick, the son of a skilled Irish stonecutter, was educated and recruited to politics by Townsend Harris¹ in Manhattan, and became a leader there of a Democratic Party organization of mostly Irish volunteer firefighters and street fighters. Soon after being defeated in a Congressional race due to sabotage from the Party elites, he left New York with some friends for California in 1849. Some went for the gold; Broderick went for the political fight, and built a political machine in San Francisco modeled on that of New York. In 1850 he was elected to the State Senate, where he waged fight after fight against the legislation proposed by the pro-southern, aka "Chivalry" Democrats.

In 1857, Broderick was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he soon found himself in a head-to-head battle with the Buchanan Administration he had helped to elect. The hottest issue of the day was the bill to admit Kansas under a fraudulently contrived pro-slavery state constitution, which Buchanan was vehemently promoting. In his first speech in the Senate, the new Senator ignored all protocol and denounced the President in no uncertain terms, saying: "...I do not intend, because I am a member of the Democratic party, to permit the President of the United States, who has been elected by that party, to create civil war in Kansas..."²

The following year Broderick split the Democratic Party in California, creating what became known as the Anti-Lecompton, or anti-Administration Democratic

1. Townsend Harris, a believer in education for all classes of people, was the founder of the City College of New York. He later became the first Consul General to Japan.

2. John C. Rives, excerpted from the *Congressional Globe: First session of the 35th Congress*, 1858, p. 164.

Party, and in 1859 he stumped the state campaigning for his slate, waging war on the pro-slavery Lecompton Democrats. Early in the campaign, Broderick was challenged to a duel for a supposed insult by the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court, David Terry. Broderick refused to retract his truthful remarks. His slate, despite a vigorous canvass and last minute coalition with the Republicans, was defeated, and five days later Broderick was assassinated by way of a duel. His dying words were, "I die because I opposed a corrupt administration and the extension of slavery." Terry would soon return to his native Texas and recruit a Confederate regiment.



San Francisco Classical music and theater impresario Thomas Maguire

Trovatore, was performed, and was an instant sensation, with 20,000 tickets sold for eleven performances. *Ernani*, *La Traviata*, and *Attila* were performed by end of summer.

The following year it was *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Traviata*, *Ernani*, and *Rigoletto*. There were 129 major productions, with about 1,500 tickets sold for each, totaling 217,500, to a population of 60,000, mostly gold miners who otherwise would spend their time and money in gambling houses and brothels. For 30 years, Maguire continued this effort, with stunning success, despite fires and bankruptcies and many other setbacks; eventually he built 12 theaters and a music academy.

Once he was quoted saying, "I lost \$50,000 this year, but didn't I give them opera, eh?"

The Power of Music

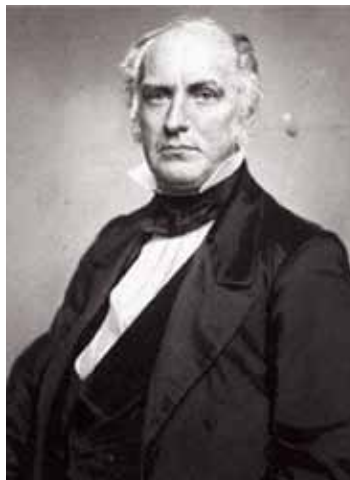
Although Broderick's political movement contained many people from quite diverse backgrounds, in San Francisco the core of his political machine was made up of former New Yorkers. One of these was Tom Maguire, an individual who had been a close friend of Broderick's in Manhattan, and preceded him to San Francisco by several months.

Once in San Francisco, Maguire proceeded to launch an all-out cultural war. He opened a saloon, and upstairs built a theater, where he began drawing in opera singers, starting in 1849, in the wildest days of the gold rush. Maguire had been a carriage hack driver stationed at the Park Theater in Manhattan, where he developed a love for the theater, working later as a bartender there.

In 1849, the Verdi aria, '*Ernani! Ernani, involami*,' was sung in Maguire's Jenny Lind Theater above his saloon, and Verdi became an instant sensation. Maguire, a semi-literate Irishman, began recruiting celebrity sopranos and others from around the world, increasingly throughout the decade. In 1851 he brought in the Booth family, and *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* were performed in that year. By 1859, the first full opera, *Il*

Edward Baker & Thomas Starr King

Broderick was not the only one in California who would risk life and limb to create a civilized state and save the union. Edward D. Baker, the great friend of Abraham Lincoln, orator, lawyer, statesman, and soldier, was another. A founder of the Republican Party in California, and leader of the pro-union, anti-slavery cause, he fought to ally with the Broderick Democrats against the Lecomptonites, and the one to whom those last words of Broderick were spoken. Baker delivered the oration at Broderick's funeral before an immense audience. He challenged them:



Edward D. Baker, who served in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, was the founder of the California Republican Party.

...Who now shall speak for California? Who be the interpreter of the wants of the Pacific Coast? Who can appeal to the communities of the Atlantic who love free labor? Who can speak for masses of men with a passionate love for the classes from whence he sprung? Who can defy the blandishments of power, the insolence of office, the corruption of administrations? What hopes are buried with him in the grave?

In his legal career in San Francisco, Baker took up many unpopular causes. In one case, he defended a gambler who had shot and killed a U.S. Marshall. The whole city was whipped up in a lynch mob frenzy against the gambler. In his summation to the jury, Baker said,

The profession to which we belong is, of all others, fearless of public opinion. It has ever stood up against the tyranny of monarchs on the one hand, and the tyranny of public opinion on the other . . . there is no wretch so steeped in all the agonies of vice and crime, that I would not have a heart to listen to his cry, and a tongue to speak in his defense, though around his head all the wrath of public opinion should gather, and rage, and roar, and roll, as the ocean rolls around the rock. And if I ever forget, if I ever deny, that highest duty of my profession, may God palsy this arm and hush my voice forever. . . .

Baker was elected to the U.S. Senate from Oregon in October 1860. On his way to Washington, D.C., he stopped in San Francisco where in a mass meeting, he uplifted the crowd to such an extent that the Democratic state delivered a plurality for Lincoln a few weeks later. In the Senate, he did more in his short tenure to demolish the arguments of the slave power ideologues than anyone else, and was Lincoln's most crucial ally in pushing his war measures through.

Following Lincoln's call to arms, Baker traveled to Manhattan, where he delivered a thrilling speech at a mass rally of 100,000 at Union Square, and recruited a regiment of former residents of California and Oregon, for which he was Colonel. He was killed in the first battle at Balls Bluff near Leesburg, Virginia. In more than one reported discussion, he had expressed the view that he did not expect to live long, but rather to fall while leading his inexperienced regiment, and would be content if he did.³

Yet another hero of that day was the Reverend



Thomas Starr King, leader of the fight to keep California in the Union during the Civil War.

Thomas Starr King. Born in Manhattan, raised in Boston, the son of a mechanic-turned-minister of the Unitarian Church, King at a young age had gained a reputation as a gifted speaker and preacher and was recruited by Dr. Henry W. Bellows, pastor of the All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City, to pastor the First Unitarian Church in San Francisco in 1860. Known for his profound and uplifting speeches such as "Substance and Show," "Socrates," "Beethoven," and "Sight and Insight" (which proved the fallacy of sense perception and the greatness of the human mind), King's

input was much needed in California, but he soon found he was destined for an even greater role.

After the outbreak of the Civil War, and especially after the death of Baker, Starr King took it upon himself to ensure that California remained true to the Union. In addition to the speeches and sermons he brought from the East, he added a whole new repertoire of fiercely patriotic speeches, defending the Union, the revolution, Lincoln, and emancipation, fearlessly exhorting his listeners. In addition, he became the key collaborator of Dr. Bellows, who by this time had established the Sanitary Commission, the forerunner of the Red Cross, created to provide support for sick and injured Union soldiers. King traveled tirelessly throughout California and Oregon, speaking and fundraising for this cause, such that California contributed more money to the Sanitary Commission than any other state. By 1864, the tide of the war turning, he had worn down his already fragile body, and died, probably of diphtheria, at the age of 40.

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Residents of California today have no excuse to accept the degenerate "Californication," as Lyndon LaRouche so aptly names the popular culture today, nor do citizens elsewhere. Rather, let us take the great assets of the state—its huge population of many nationalities, its agricultural capability to feed the world, its access to the Pacific rim—and lead the country into the future. As Baker said in an address in San Francisco celebrating the success of the Atlantic telegraph cable, "Here all people and all tongues shall meet. Here shall be a more perfect civilization . . ."

Let us kick out Jerry Brown now!

3. For more on Baker and Broderick, see <https://www.dropbox.com/s/xazi3f2qsrnf6/BAKER.pdf?dl=0> and <https://www.dropbox.com/s/1ai19qvrnc22cet/BRODERICK.pdf?dl=0>