

FlashReport Weblog on California Politics

Happy Birthday, California Republican Party!

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Why would otherwise intelligent and practical men create a new political party? They might if times were extreme and the social fabric was deteriorating. California after it was admitted in 1850, elected two pro slavery democrat governors, and one anti-Chinese democrat governor, although it was a "free" state.



Democrat Governor Peter Burnett [1849-1851 -

pictured to the left

] was not only pro slavery but vigorously pushed legislation to prevent freed blacks to live in California. The second Governor, Democrat James McDougall 1851-1852 supported the pro slavery Kansas-Nebraska Act. The third democrat John Bigler, while not aggressively pro slavery, supported laws against Asians and "vehemently denounced Chinese immigration."

Such sentiments were not the thinking of enlightened free souls.

By 1856 California had three political parties, Democrats, Whigs and the anti Asian Know Nothing Party. Coming to the rescue from this dark period, a prairie fire began to burn. Throughout northern America a remarkable movement grew to challenge the pro slavery culture. Never before history has one race of people challenged the legitimacy of slavery to free another race of people. From this

abolitionist movement emerged the Republican Party.

The California Republican Party held it's first state convention on April 30, 1856, some 151 years ago. The meeting was held at the Sacramento Congregational church. 125 men from 13 of the 40 counties attended.

Thirty-four year old Cornelius Cole

(pictured to the right)

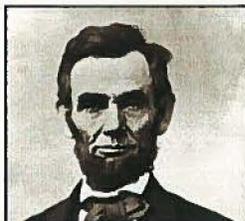
served as Secretary and chief organizer [state chairman] and wrote the Party's first manifesto, Cornelius Cole was elected as a Republican congressman during the Civil War, served in the US Senate from 1867 to 1873. The manifesto declared a radically different philosophy from the ruling democrat party.

Article 3 stated. " The principles we advocate are a complete withdrawal of all support to slavery by the federal government."

Interestingly, all key founders were middle class Sacramento merchants who included Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Leland Stanford, Edwin B and Charles Crocker. They were political and entrepreneurial visionaries. Later all these founders became fabulously successful with the development of Central Pacific Railroad, the western portion of America's first transcontinental railroad.



In 1856 the fledgling Party struggled with its first Presidential candidate, Pathfinder John C Fremont. Of only five free states that didn't vote for Fremont, he lost California by the largest margin [winning only 18%]. Republicans elected three of thirty-two senate races and eleven of of seventy-nine assembly seats. But it was a start.



By 1860 the Party grew with Abraham Lincoln leading the national ticket. Lincoln won California with only 32.3 % beating democrat Stephen Douglas who had 31.7 %. Because Republicans organized only four years earlier it helped Lincoln secure the Presidency and set the stage for abolishing slavery in America and the rapid economic growth in California.