



**Memoirs of My Life by John Charles Fremont.
Including in the Narrative Five Journeys of
Western Exploration, During the Years 1842,
1843-4, 1845-6-7, 1848-9, 1853-4.**

John Charles Frémont

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John Charles Frémont (1813 – 1890) was an American military officer, explorer, and politician who became the first candidate of the anti-slavery Republican Party for the office of President of the United States. During the 1840s, when he led four expeditions into the American West, that era's penny press and admiring historians accorded Frémont the sobriquet The Pathfinder.

During the Mexican American War, Frémont, a major in the U.S. Army, took control of California from the Bear Flag Republic in 1846. Frémont then proclaimed himself military Governor of California; however, for that he was convicted in court martial for mutiny and insubordination. After President Polk commuted his sentence, Frémont led a fourth expedition, which cost ten lives, seeking a rail route over the mountains around the 38th parallel in the winter of 1849. He retired from military service and settled in California.

Fremont writes:

"THE narrative contained in these volumes is personal. It is intended to draw together the more important and interesting parts in the journals of various expeditions made by me in the course of Western exploration, and to give my knowledge of political and military events in which I have myself had part. The principal subjects of which the book will consist, and which, with me, make its *raison d'être*, are three: the geographical explorations, made in the interest of Western expansion; the presidential campaign of 1856, made in the interest of an undivided country; and the civil war, made in the same interest. Connecting these, and naturally growing out of them, will be given enough of the threads of ordinary life to justify the claim of the work to its title of memoirs: purporting to be the history of one life, but being in reality that of three, because in substance the course of my own life was chiefly determined by its contact with the other two—the events recorded having in this way been created, or directly inspired and influenced, by three different minds, each having the same objects for a principal aim.

"The published histories of the various explorations have now passed out of date, and are new to the present generation, to which the region between the Mississippi and the Pacific Ocean presents a different face from that to which these accounts relate.

"In the present narrative the descriptions of the regions travelled over will be simply of what would then have met a traveller's eye. The prevailing impression on his mind would have been one of constant surprise that so large a portion of the earth's surface should have so long remained, unoccupied and unused. Millions of people now occupy the ground where then he encountered only wild animals and wild men. But nothing of this present condition will be given here.

The slight knowledge which a traveller could glean in journeys that were impelled forward by hunger, and thirst, and imminency of dangers, has in this day been perfected and made thoroughly available. The scant scientific information which was gathered in these travels, and which, as indications or suggestions, had its value at the time, will therefore not have any place in the present narrative. The striking features and general character of the regions traversed, the incidents which made their local coloring, and the hardships belonging to remote and solitary journeys, will be retained, so far as can well be done within the limit of the pages

which are intended to embrace narratives covering broad regions of country and half a century of American time. But the emigrants who have since then traversed and changed the face of these regions will doubtless find enough to remind them, and have pleasure in being reminded. Out of these expeditions came the seizure of California in 1846."

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