

Searching for Compromise

Missouri Congressman
John Richard Barret's
Fight to Save the Union

BY NICHOLAS W. SACCO

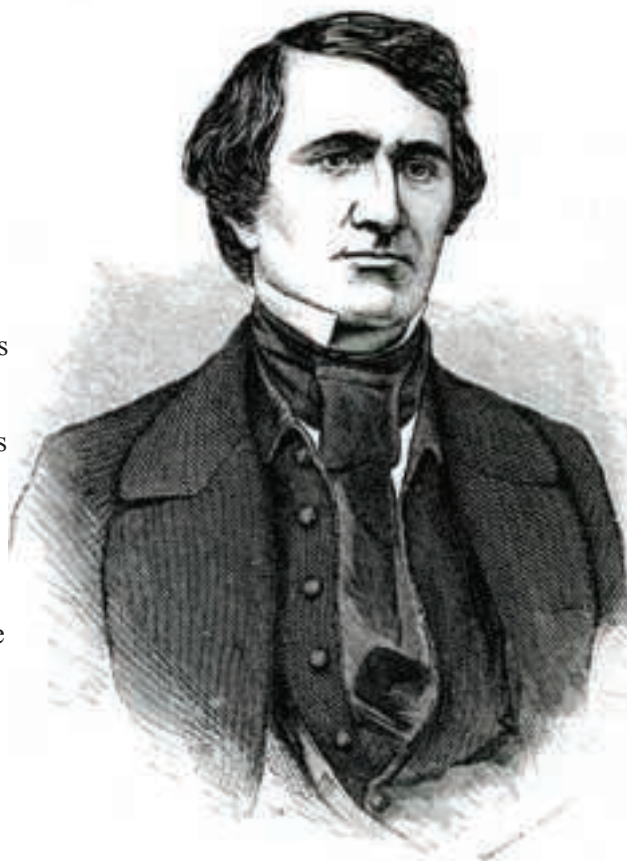


As Missouri voters went to the polls to elect a new governor and representatives for Congress in August 1860, a store clerk in Galena, Illinois, followed the proceedings with a careful eye.

Ulysses S. Grant had moved to Illinois months earlier after living in St. Louis for five years as a farmer, but his thoughts remained focused on the messy political situation in Missouri. He took particular interest in the hotly contested race for Missouri's First Congressional District between Republican Frank Blair and incumbent Democrat John Richard Barret, admitting to a St. Louis acquaintance that he felt "more interest in the contest you have just gone through than I shall in the November [Presidential] election." Although this future president would become a devoted Republican after the Civil War, Grant's sympathies in this contest were with Barret. While stating that he didn't always agree with the Democratic Party, he confessed, "I don't like to see a Republican beat the party. . . . I feel anxious to hear of Blair's defeat."¹

Grant's hopes would fall short as Blair defeated Barret by 1,500 votes. Barret's current term with the 36th Congress, however, would not be completed until March 3, 1861. As seven southern states seceded from the Union following Republican Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency, the task of representing St. Louis' interests in Congress during this national emergency would fall to Barret. In the months before Lincoln's inauguration, Congress frantically debated various compromise measures to maintain sectional harmony. Barret would contribute to the debate with a remarkable pro-compromise speech to his fellow Congressmen on February 21, eleven days before the expiration of his term.

Disavowing both northern and southern extremism, Barret's pleas for compromise would ultimately fail as the Civil War broke out less than two months later. His political experiences



John Richard Barret (1825–1903) spent less than twenty years in St. Louis as a lawyer who helped organize the St. Louis Agricultural Society. After his election, then removal, and election again to the U.S. Congress, Barret moved to New York. (Image: *Missouri Historical Society*)

during the 1850s and 1860s—which have not been previously analyzed by historians—are nonetheless significant for several reasons. As a respected proslavery and pro-Union Democrat, Barret climbed the ladder of Missouri politics in the 1850s as a devoted supporter of westward expansion, railroad construction, and the protection of slaveholders' rights within the state.

During his short term in Congress, Barret's views on the secession crisis reflected the concerns of a majority of Missouri voters who took a cautious approach to secession and its potential consequences. By looking at Barret's political life during the Civil War era, scholars can gain a better understanding of why most Missourians—especially those within the Democratic party—simultaneously supported slavery and the Union and were still hopeful of a compromise even after Lincoln's election.

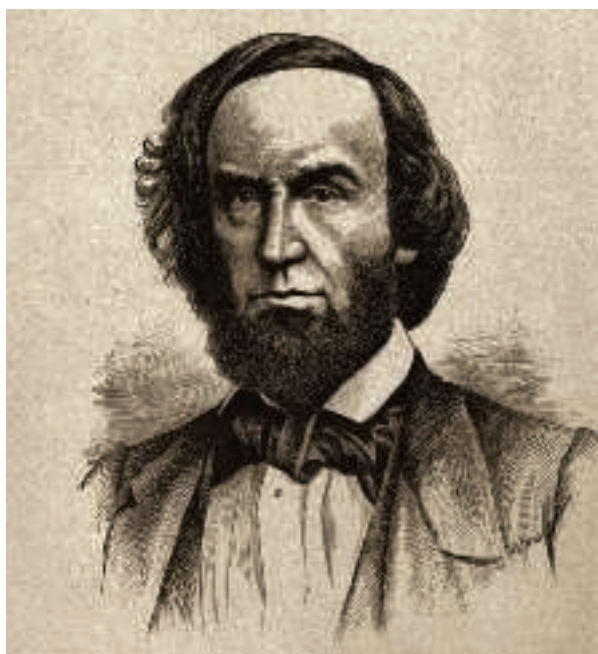
Early Life and Entrance into Missouri Politics

John Richard Barret was born on August 21, 1825, in Greensburg, Kentucky. As a youth he received an education at the town's local schoolhouse, and around age 14 he moved to St. Louis to join his father, who had recently started a grocery business in the city. Barret was accepted into Saint Louis University shortly after arriving and graduated with honors in 1843. A gifted student, he gave the valedictorian speech for his graduation class.²

After graduation, Barret began studying for a law degree and eventually opened his own successful practice. According to one biographical sketch published in 1860, his "magnetism of

character,” comprehensive knowledge of the law, and “frankness of manner” made him a popular figure in the St. Louis legal community. Local Democrats soon encouraged him to consider a run for office. In 1852 Barret successfully pursued a seat in the Missouri state legislature at the tender age of 27.³

Barret’s political emergence came at a time of intense party strife among Missouri Democrats. The party had a divisive split in 1850 largely over questions about slavery and its westward expansion into new federal territories. Thomas Hart Benton, one of Missouri’s original U.S. senators, the creator of the Missouri Compromise, and a maverick politician within the national Democratic party, was at the center of this split. For several years Benton had expressed growing skepticism about slavery’s expansion into the territories. While he supported the protection of slavery in states where it already existed, he believed that slavery would be unsustainable in the west because of the region’s climate and topography. He also feared that proslavery agitation threatened the state of the Union. In the 1840s he strongly opposed the Mexican-American War on the grounds that it was a naked land grab for future slave territory in the south.



Claiborne Fox Jackson (1806–1862) ran for Missouri governor in 1860 as an opponent of secession but secretly conspired to lead the state’s secession. The state legislature removed him from office after he recognized Missouri as a free republic, leading to its being recognized as a state by the Confederacy. Jackson refused to recognize his removal and served as part of a state government in exile in Arkansas before his death in late 1862. (Image: *Confederate War Journal*)

Convinced that whites and free blacks could not live together in harmony and that slavery’s expansion would exacerbate racial tensions, he asserted in 1850 that “the incurability of the evil is the greatest objection to the extension of slavery.”⁴

Not all Missouri Democrats agreed with Benton, however. In 1849, state senator Claiborne Fox Jackson and other proslavery Democrats issued a series of resolutions criticizing Benton’s position. The “Jackson Resolutions” asserted that Congress had no authority to ban slavery in the western territories; only the residents of a given territory held that right. If “northern fanaticism” against slavery continued, Missouri would have ample reason to act with the South toward disunion. Benton responded by arguing that the Jackson faction, influenced by the South Carolina radical proslavery Democrat John C. Calhoun, promoted treason and discord between North and South.⁵

Barret sided with the pro-Benton faction upon arrival in Jefferson City. Interestingly, he and future opponent Frank Blair were initially strong pro-Benton allies in the state legislature. Barret even voted for Blair to be Speaker of the House at an extra session of the legislature in 1852 and later admitted that “it was formerly my good fortune to stand upon the same broad and enduring platform . . . in the State Legislature, together with [him].”⁶ A central element of that “broad and enduring platform” included several efforts to use public money to build railroads throughout the state. During the session Barret offered two different amendments to railroad bills that Blair supported. One unsuccessfully aimed to use a portion of public land sales to fund construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad (the first east-west line to cross the entire state), while a separate, successful amendment used funds to construct the Missouri Pacific Railroad.⁷

Equally important, Barret, Blair, and other pro-Benton legislators worked to check the machinations of the Southern Rights wing of the Democratic party. Blair took the initiative in a fiery speech in February 1853, denouncing the Jackson Resolutions as the work of disunionists who aimed to nullify federal laws. He defended Benton as a supporter of slaveholding interests, but only within the context of maintaining the Union. Agitation on slavery in the territories would lead to sectionalism and disunion. A resolution from Representative Benjamin Tompkins after Blair’s speech called upon Missouri’s legislators to reject “the railings of fanaticism, either in the north or south” and rescind the Jackson Resolutions.⁸

The resolution failed to pass after proslavery Whigs sided with Southern Rights Democrats



Francis (Frank) Blair (1821–1875) was one of the best-connected political leaders in St. Louis in the mid-nineteenth century. His brother Montgomery was postmaster general in the Lincoln administration, and his cousin B. Gratz Brown served as both governor and senator. His history in the U.S. Congress became complicated in the years after his first election to the House of Representatives as a Free-Soiler in 1856. John Barret defeated him in the 1858 election, but then Blair was seated in the 36th Congress in early June 1860 after successfully contesting the election. He resigned June 25, then lost again to Barret in the special election for the seat. He won the election in 1860, but resigned in July 1861 to join the Union army. He won the 1862 election but lost the seat to Samuel Knox, who contested the results. Blair was a key figure in keeping Missouri from seceding from the Union. (Image: Library of Congress)

against the measure, but Barret supported Blair's speech and the effort to rescind the resolutions. The Benton faction's crusade against the Jackson Resolutions did not necessarily indicate antislavery beliefs, however. Antislavery sentiment had minimal influence on Missouri politics in the early 1850s, and as historian William E. Parrish points out, concerns about southern radicalism and disunionism inspired Blair's speech. Barret himself echoed Benton's belief in protecting slavery where it existed in the states, later stating while in Congress that he supported Benton's doctrine of "non-intervention, no agitation, security

to property, [and] tranquility to the people" on the subject.⁹

Barret was re-elected to the Missouri House of Representatives in 1854. He was a frontrunner for Speaker of the House—gaining the third most votes during early balloting—and supported Thomas Hart Benton for Missouri's vacant seat in the U.S. Senate. Most notably, he authored an act to create the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association. The act aimed to promote commercial interests in St. Louis, and as president of the association Barret worked to manage both public and private funds to create a 50-acre fairground within the city limits. He also declined to run for office in 1856 and even gave up his private law practice so that he could dedicate himself to promoting the association's annual fair. An official report from 1858 boasted that the fairground featured an amphitheater that could seat 36,000 people, "the largest in the Union." The event was used to promote the finest horses, cattle, and other farm animals; 81 booths and several buildings were also erected to promote agricultural machinery, sell food and drinks, and house a large musical band.¹⁰

Barret's work as the president of the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association reflected his belief that increased commercial activity would not only boost the city's economy but also drown out divisive agitation over slavery. By bringing together white farmers from all parts of the country to share agricultural technology, techniques, and practices, Barret hoped to strengthen interstate commercial connections and encourage a stronger bond to the Union. That such connections would be made in St. Louis was central to Barret's vision for promoting the city as both an economic power and a center of American patriotism free of sectional politics. At an award dinner held in his honor on New Year's Eve in 1856, Barret remarked about St. Louis that "her trade and commerce [consist] of the trade of all nations; standing, as she does, at the geographical center of a vast region . . . surrounded by millions of acres of the richest and most varied minerals in the world, it must be apparent to the most superficial observer that the proper encouragement of her agricultural and mechanical interest will result in prosperity unexampled."¹¹

Despite Barret's wishes, the divisive politics of slavery and the emergence of the newly created antislavery Republican party in the North created new fractures within the Democratic party in Missouri. Pro- and anti-Benton factions held separate conventions and sent different delegates to the Democratic national convention in 1856.



The St. Louis Fairgrounds was home to the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association starting in 1856; John Barret was among its organizers. Fairs like this one grew out of state fairs that emerged at mid-century as a way to promote new technologies and economic growth in cities like St. Louis. The grounds are now Fairground Park, at the northwest corner of N. Grand and Natural Bridge Avenue in St. Louis. (Image: Library of Congress)

Frank Blair ran for and successfully won a seat in Congress for Missouri's First District as a pro-Benton Democrat committed to protecting slavery where it existed and promoting sectional harmony. Shortly after the election, however, he began to have a change of heart. Influenced by the Republican party's stance against slavery's westward expansion and taking note of the changing political landscape in St. Louis—where an influx of northern- and foreign-born residents, many of whom were opposed to slavery, would outnumber southern-born residents by 1860—Blair began to embrace antislavery politics. In 1857 he started championing emancipation and colonization of freed blacks to Central America. To fund this initiative, Blair concocted a scheme to grant all remaining public lands in Missouri to the state and sell them for the purpose of purchasing all of the state's slaves and transporting them out of the country.¹²

Far from promoting racial equality, Blair openly admitted his deep-seated racial prejudices against African Americans in speeches promoting

his colonization plan. "The territories should be reserved for free white men," he argued. "Freed blacks hold a place in this country which cannot be maintained. Those who have fled to the North are most unwelcome visitors. The strong repugnance of the free white laborer to be yoked with the negro refugee, breeds an enmity between races, which must end in the expulsion of the latter."¹³ While most Missourians statewide would remain with the Democratic party in the years before the Civil War, historian Louis Gerteis argues that Blair's antislavery sentiments became increasingly popular in St. Louis, where the enslaved population was only two percent of the total population by 1860, and much skepticism reigned about the intentions of the Southern Rights wing of the state's Democratic party.¹⁴

Barret, Thomas Hart Benton, and other proslavery Democrats felt betrayed by Blair and his supporters. After Blair's cousin Benjamin Gratz Brown gave a speech supporting compensated emancipation for Missouri's slaves, Benton expressed disgust at the use of his name to



Thomas Hart Benton (1782–1858) served as senator from Missouri for its first three decades. A Jacksonian Democrat, Benton came to see expansion of slavery into the western territories as problematic, a position that cost him his senate seat in the 1850 election. (Image: Library of Congress)

support Blair during the 1856 election. He attacked both men in a harsh letter that Barret would often recite at future debates against Blair: “For persons calling themselves my friends,” Benton warned, “to attach the whole policy of my life, which was to keep slavery agitation out of the state, and get my support in the canvass by keeping me ignorant of what they intended to do, is the greatest outrage I have ever experienced.”¹⁵

Barret made similar accusations against Blair in a speech to Congress in June 1860. After Blair won his Congressional seat in 1856, “he and his [newspaper] claimed” that his victory was “a Black Republican victory, and it was hailed as such by the papers in the North,” Barret complained. “After election, the gentleman [was] lionized throughout the North as the great champion of freedom from a slave state. After election he had no eyes, no ears, no understanding for anything like slavery,” he sneered, accusing Blair of “advocating emancipation in Missouri; making war upon the institutions of his state; making war upon the policy of Colonel Benton’s whole life, and vilifying with the most malignant abuse the party under whose banner he had been elected.”¹⁶ Who could be relied upon to represent St. Louis Democrats and defend slavery in future elections?

Entrance into National Politics

As the midterm elections of 1858 approached, proslavery Democrats in St. Louis sought a candidate who would support President James Buchanan’s administration and promote the idea of popular sovereignty in the western territories, which would allow a territory’s residents (and not Congress) to determine whether or not they wanted slavery. These “National” Democrats sought a viable candidate to compete for Missouri’s First Congressional district seat against the incumbent Blair, who was now essentially a Republican but running under the banner of a “Free” Democrat since the Republican party still had little support in the city. Barret was out of town when the city’s National Democrats raised his name as a potential candidate during their convention in June. The convention’s central focus throughout was protecting slavery in Missouri. One speaker baldly declared that he “wanted to put a man in nomination, who, if elected, would protect property, whether a horse or a nigger.” By the end of the convention, Barret would have unanimous support as the party’s nominee for Congress.¹⁷ Barret and Blair, once close allies in the Missouri General Assembly a few short years ago, would now go to battle against each other.

The two men agreed to a series of debates in July 1858 throughout the St. Louis area. Much like the famous debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas that would begin a month later in Illinois, the St. Louis debates focused almost entirely on slavery. In many ways the arguments marshaled by Barret and Blair were two sides of the same coin: both were opposed to racial equality and were primarily concerned about the state of white labor in Missouri. Their major difference concerned whether whites would benefit more under a slave or free labor society. The deceptively titled *Missouri Republican* functioned as the city’s most popular Democratic newspaper, and it gleefully reprinted many of Barret’s remarks during these debates in support of slavery within the state and popular sovereignty for determining slavery’s status in the territories. These speeches provide some of the clearest insights into Barret’s political views.¹⁸

During the first debates at Laclede Station, Florissant, and Carondelet, the two candidates focused their arguments on who was the true heir to the complex legacy of Thomas Hart Benton, who had recently died in April. Blair highlighted Benton’s growing skepticism over slavery. He cited a book Benton wrote a year earlier that was harshly critical of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, which declared that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional and that Congress had no right to ban slavery in the western territories. Blair argued that he was merely following in his mentor’s footsteps. He proclaimed himself “as the champion of free labor in

Missouri—superiority for the white man” and stated that he had an obligation to support emancipation in Missouri. He also vowed to stop the creation of the proslavery Lecompton Constitution in Kansas, which was created by a minority of proslavery leaders in that territory and supported by President Buchanan. Citing Barret’s previous statements as a state legislator repudiating the Jackson Resolutions, Blair accused Barret of flip-flopping by now arguing that popular sovereignty—not Congress—should determine slavery’s status in the territories. Blair also used his understanding of history to suggest that “when I advocate emancipation I but reiterate the sentiments of Washington, of Jefferson, of the best men of the olden time.”¹⁹

Barret repeatedly cited Benton’s letter disavowing Blair and the “Free” Democrats shortly before his death. He also accused Blair of being sympathetic to the Republican party and against the interests of Missourians. “Mr. Blair claims to represent the Democrat party, but I call him the representative of the Black Republican party,” Barret thundered. He argued that Blair betrayed his supporters when he began advocating emancipation and colonization after winning his Congressional seat in 1856. “He has recently affiliated so closely with those who take pride in the congomens. . . . He formerly claimed to be a Democrat—a National Benton Democrat—and it was upon the influence of that great name, that he hobbled into place and power . . . he did not then advance doctrines so heretical to the interest of the Pro-Slavery party, nay, in positive terms he rejected scornfully the [Republican] name which he now is so ambitious to march.”²⁰ It was Barret, not Blair, who was following in Benton’s footsteps by protecting slaveholding interests.

Barret expressed support for the proslavery Lecompton Constitution in Kansas and the Buchanan administration’s policy of popular sovereignty. He believed that ongoing violence between Missouri Bushwackers and Kansas Jayhawkers in “Bleeding Kansas” would soon subside once a constitution was ratified, and he attempted to divert the conversation away from slavery by promising that he would work to have the proposed Pacific Railroad—which would be the country’s first east-west transcontinental railroad—come through St. Louis if he was elected to Congress.²¹

The status of white labor emerged as a point of contention at debates in Allenton and Manchester. Blair defended his colonization scheme as in the interest of white workers. He “did not desire free negroes to be set loose in the State” or anywhere further west and reiterated his promise that the sale

of public lands throughout the state would cover the costs of moving the state’s black population to Central America. The Blair-supporting *Missouri Democrat* reinforced this argument by claiming that slave labor degraded white labor. “The hundreds of thousands who would seek here a settlement . . . would unquestionably hesitate long, if instead of the advance tread of freedom, they saw the reconquering march of slavery making a front,” the paper argued. “Men of surplus wealth will not invest in countries blighted with the institutions of decay. Men of enterprise will not carry their zeal to sections where it only wins rebuke or toils hopelessly against servile competition.”²²

Barret found Blair’s free labor arguments ridiculous and unconstitutional. According to the *Missouri Republican*, “Barret convinced the people that the Constitution protected their accruing rights as well as those now in existence, and that owners could no more be deprived of the increase of their slaves, without remuneration, than of the increase of their orchards, or of their cattle.” Additionally, “he furthermore showed the utter impossibility of getting rid of the negroes.” To strengthen his argument, Barret recalled a recent visit to Illinois. While there, he stopped at a hotel tavern that was tended by a free African American. Outraged, Barret asked the hotel manager why he didn’t employ a white bartender. “‘Oh,’ he replied, ‘I can get a free nigger for fifteen dollars a month, whilst a white bar keeper I should have to pay from thirty to forty dollars a month.’” This incident, according to Barret, demonstrated that white labor was freest and wages were highest when black labor was enslaved outside the boundaries of wage labor. “Mr. Barret desired to see no such competition in Missouri,” the *Missouri Republican* reported.²³

Barret, like Blair, utilized his understanding of history and the legacies of Washington and Jefferson to justify his proslavery position. He asserted that the Constitution was a proslavery document written by slaveholders and that Blair was the radical ideologue distorting history. “Let us remember,” Barret warned, “that the commander-in-chief of the revolutionary forces was a slaveholder, that the author of the Declaration of our Independence was a slaveholder, that the hero of New Orleans and sage of the Hermitage [Andrew Jackson], Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor, and a host of other worthies, who in the cabinet and on the field of battle have performed the most efficient services to the country, [have] done more than any other men on earth to promote the cause of human liberty and the freedom of the white race.”²⁴ He declared that proslavery Democrats in St.

Louis had nothing to be ashamed of. History proved that they were the rightful, conservative heirs of the founding generation's efforts to create a republic dedicated to political equality, freedom, and liberty for whites.

Barret declared during later debates at Bridgeton and Creve Coeur that Blair's colonization plan was a "free labor humbug" and warned of the dangers posed by the antislavery Republican party emerging in the North and now, through Frank Blair, the slave state of Missouri. "In their frenzy for the negro they have ignored every duty to the white man," he complained, "and in their desire to burst the bands of slavery they have come near severing the bands of the Union. I do not stand here as a slavery propagandist, but as one disposed to debate this question in any shape or form, and I raise my voice against the unwarrantable aggression on the part of this anti-slavery party." Republicans, just like radical southern firebrands, were threatening the future of the country. Blair determined "to make war upon the dearest interests of the whole State"; therefore, a vote for Barret was a vote against radicalism. Like his hero Thomas Hart Benton, Barret reinforced his support for "non-interference, no agitation, security of property, and tranquility to the people" when it came to slavery.²⁵

Blair's position as the first major antislavery candidate in a slave state brought national attention to the election. But when voters went to the polls on August 3, they brought a close victory to Barret, who garnered 7,057 votes to Blair's 6,631. Proslavery Democrats throughout the country, including President Buchanan, celebrated Barret's victory.²⁶ Barret took his seat with the 36th Congress in late 1859 hoping to protect popular sovereignty as a method for determining slavery's westward expansion and promote St. Louis as a central terminus for the Pacific Railroad.

Barret served on the Committee on Public Lands and used that role to promote the Pacific Railroad in St. Louis. On May 26, 1860, he used his interest in the railroad to make his first speech in the House of Representatives. Echoing the spirit of Manifest Destiny, Barret upheld white "frontier men" who migrated west as "the true representatives of American Progress and of American spirit; the men who, by their enterprise, have, in spite of all dangers, hardships, and privations, increased and extended our usefulness." What better way to support white westward expansion than by a railroad line through the center of the country? Even though he had personally experienced the bitter nature of sectional politics during the 1858 Congressional campaign,

Barret portrayed Missouri as a state beyond sectionalism. The proposed Pacific Railroad "should be built for the whole Union," he asserted. "It should be for the North, for the South, for the East, and for the West; it should be for a whole nation, and not for a section—for the whole people, and not for a party." The middle states were "favored particularly by Heaven, not only in their climate and in their soil, but in their geographical positions." Establishing this rail line in Missouri was imperative since it "constitutes a well-defined geographical division of the Union. It is the center; and it possesses more real wealth and greatness than any other portion of the globe of the same extent. It embraces within its bounds the extreme North and the extreme South." Moreover, establishing the line in Missouri would divert the country's attention from bitter divisions over slavery toward the work of growing the country's economy and promoting patriotism. "Let sectional strife between the States subside into a united effort for national purposes, national defense, and national welfare," he argued, "and we may once more see them cemented into one social, friendly community. . . . Community of interest and social intercourse are stronger to bind a people together than any written constitution or legislative enactment. Common welfare is the great regulator, propeller, and lubricator of all government machinery; upon it depends our Union and our Greatness as a nation."²⁷

As Congress debated Barret's measure, trouble brewed on the horizon back in St. Louis. Frank Blair claimed that his loss in the 1858 Congressional election was due to fraud. His claims gained traction among Republicans within a bitterly partisan atmosphere in Washington, D.C., and suddenly Barret found his political future threatened. During the Committee on Elections' investigation, Blair claimed that Barret paid residents to vote for him, particularly non-naturalized Irish immigrants ineligible to vote. Barret defended himself in a speech to Congress on June 6, denying the claims and arguing that Blair's changing attitudes toward slavery were the real reason he lost. After many long hours of testimony and a thorough investigation of Blair's claims, the House of Representatives on June 9 voted along party lines 93 to 91 to unseat Barret and replace him with Blair. Whether or not Barret actually committed election fraud is unclear, but his time in Congress was at an end. Blair made a speech in Congress declaring victory, but in a surprise move he decided to resign his seat in order to make a case to the voters for his re-election in 1860.²⁸

With Missouri's First Congressional District seat now vacant, Barret and Blair returned to St.

Louis in July 1860 for another round of debates. The upcoming Congressional election would determine who would serve out the remainder of the second session in the 36th Congress (the “short term” that would last from December 1860 until March 4, 1861) and who would serve in the 37th Congress (the “long term” starting in December 1861). St. Louis Democrats orchestrated a huge reception for Barret at the Planters’ House hotel on June 29. Horse-drawn carriages, band music, and thousands of supporters lined the streets as he arrived by boat along the Mississippi River. According to the *Missouri Republican*, “a rocket was sent up as a signal” when Barret arrived, “which was immediately answered by the sound of a cannon on the St. Louis shore.”²⁹

Barret addressed the crowd at Lucas Market. He expressed his love for St. Louis and his fears of potential disunion being perpetrated by extremism on the slavery question. It became evident that he was tired of the topic. While in Congress “we feasted upon speeches from the North and from the South. We were filled with this eternal nigger question [laughter]. We had it morning, noon and night, and I had to sit and listen to it.” He argued that he served “with the intention of attempting to represent a great people, occupying a central position in the great Mississippi Valley.” Rather than taking a side for north or south, Barret stated that his primary interest was “bringing forward something in the way of Western measures.” Supporting a Pacific Railroad line through Missouri was one such measure. Also important for Barret was the fact that he left slavery out of his railroad speech. “Upon this Pacific Railroad bill . . . I congratulated myself on the fact that I was able to make a full-length speech in which the subject of the nigger was not touched upon at all [cheers]. . . . I eschewed all such questions as far as I could.”³⁰

Barret also expressed his belief that America’s future was tied with the economic success of the west, which in his mind included Missouri. “Fellow citizens, Massachusetts and South Carolina have dictated our politics long enough. They have raised issues upon which this Union has been shaken time and again. The representatives of those States do not know the extent of this great valley; they do not know that the census of 1860 will place us in control of this great Republic [loud cheers]. They do not know that even Missouri, with her broad domain populated as thickly as the New England States, could this day take Massachusetts in one hand and South Carolina in the other, and box their heads together as disunionists [laughter and cheers].”³¹ Contrary to Abraham Lincoln’s famous declaration

that a divided country could not exist half free and half slave, Barret argued that allowing residents in the western territories to determine whether or not they wanted slavery was the only course for maintaining national unity. Why the work of establishing a transcontinental railroad continued to be derailed by debates over slavery was a source of confusion and frustration for Barret.

With Blair now openly running as a Republican for the 1860 Congressional election, Barret raised fears about Blair being an abolitionist. At a debate in Manchester he cited Blair’s endorsement of author Hinton Rowan Helper’s famous book calling for the south to free its slaves. The *Missouri Republican* supported Barret’s tactics and asserted that “this book, as is well known, is literally stuffed with Abolitionism of the rankest and most abject character. Black Republicanism, however, has nothing manly or chivalric in it, and in its attempts to elevate the nigger it drags down the white man to a corresponding level.” Barret continued to raise these fears at Bridgeton, where he quoted from Republican leaders who opposed slavery’s westward expansion and argued that the party’s principles were “wholly revolutionary and [of a] destructive tendency.”³²

As the Congressional election in August and the presidential election in November neared, the *Missouri Republican* wrote editorials and published letters to the editor in support of Barret and presidential candidate Stephen Douglas, both of whom were committed to popular sovereignty in the territories and the end of sectional agitation on the slavery question. The paper cited Barret’s education at Saint Louis University and argued that he “has been the author of untold blessings to our city.” Most notably, his work with the Agricultural and Mechanical Association deserved special attention because it had “become not only the boast of our city, but a source of national pride.” When others played politics and flirted with disunionism, “Missouri Dick” followed the conservative footsteps of Thomas Hart Benton in consistently promoting Unionism, commerce, and westward expansion. Likewise, supporting Barret’s Democratic confidante Douglas for President, according to one published letter to the editor, would guarantee economic progress uninterrupted by debate over slavery or disunion as the government would pledge to “leave the people to regulate their domestic affairs as may best suit their interests.”³³ Would this line of thinking lead Barret and the “Douglas Democrats” to victory?

The results of the August Congressional elections were somewhat contradictory. Barret won the “short term” election, meaning he would return to

Washington, D.C., to finish out the second session of the 36th Congress. Blair, however, won the “long term” election by 1,500 votes, requiring that Barret leave his seat after March 1861. William E. Parrish suggests that voter confusion over the short- and long-term ballots—and possibly even the distribution of bogus ballots—led to this odd result.³⁴ Another interpretation is that voters might have believed that claims of voter fraud in the 1858 election were suspect and that Barret was entitled to finish out his term. Regardless, Blair’s victory for the next Congressional session was suggestive of St. Louis’ growing support for the antislavery Republican party. When the presidential election took place later that November, St. Louis voters likewise preferred Blair’s ally Abraham Lincoln, the only county in Missouri to vote Republican.

It is safe to conclude, however, that Barret’s proslavery unionism and support for popular sovereignty appealed to a majority of Missouri voters. Voters statewide elected Democrat Claiborne Fox Jackson for governor on the same day Barret lost his seat for the long term, and they would later vote Stephen Douglas for president (the only other state he won was New Jersey).³⁵ Both men campaigned on the same policies as Barret, and, much like the *Missouri Republican*, all three would be featured on Democratic tickets together in newspapers throughout the state. Barret’s views may not have reflected the changing political views of St. Louis residents when he returned to Congress to finish his term, but they reflected the concerns and desires of a majority of voters throughout the state. This consideration is important because Barret would be required to speak for all Missourians—not just those in his district—as disunion and civil war loomed on the horizon.

The Beginning of Southern Secession

The political situation had changed dramatically by the time Barret arrived in Washington, D.C., in early December. Abraham Lincoln had won the presidency through a plurality of northern votes and would become the nation’s first Republican president. The Democratic party’s national split into northern and southern factions over the appropriate course for determining slavery’s westward expansion had badly divided the party. Some Democrats claimed that Lincoln’s victory was illegitimate, and political leaders in South Carolina began debating the merits of leaving the Union. Two and a half weeks after Barret took his seat in Congress, the Palmetto State declared secession. By February 1861, seven Deep

South states had seceded. A national emergency reigned as the future of the United States was now cast in doubt.

Barret’s role in Congress’s compromise proceedings was limited but important. He was not picked to represent Missouri in the Committee of Thirty-Three, which was given the task of creating compromise legislation to stem the tide of secession. Likewise, he also watched from the sidelines when 131 delegates from northern and border slave states met in early February for the Washington Peace Conference. The Peace Conference would support a modified version of the Crittenden Compromise by proposing to extend the Missouri Compromise line dividing free and slave territory through to the eastern line of California.³⁶

Barret made his first address to Congress on January 19. He stated that he had received the minutes of a meeting held in St. Louis that had been attended by prominent residents “irrespective of party, to take into consideration the unfortunate condition of the country.” Barret argued that the resolutions were “eminently conservative, and in every way worthy of the principles of adjustment proposed by Mr. [John] Crittenden.” They included declarations that “slave property is a constitutional right,” that an amendment should be passed “so that the slavery question may never again disturb the public peace or impair the national harmony,” that St. Louis was for the Union but would “*demand our equal and constitutional rights, and will not be content with less,*” and, equally importantly, that any use of aggressive military force against seceding states would plunge the country into a bloody civil war, which should be avoided at all costs.³⁷ Reflective of previous statements made by Barret, the proceedings conveyed the desire of many St. Louisans (and, by extension, Missourians) for a compromise measure to maintain the Union and protect slavery.

Barret remained relatively quiet for the next month as he prepared to give another speech to Congress in late February. Two important developments emerged in that time, however. The Committee of Thirty-Three, led by Ohio Congressman Thomas Corwin, offered a proposed constitutional amendment to permanently protect slavery in the states where it already existed. Barret became a strong advocate for the “Corwin Amendment” and would use his pro-compromise speech to support its passage.

Meanwhile, political leaders back home in Missouri—led by Governor Jackson—proposed the creation of a convention to debate the merits of



THE PEACE CONVENTION IN SESSION AT WASHINGTON

secession. Missourians took a cautious approach and elected pro-Union delegates by an overwhelming margin to the convention. The proposed convention was still a week away from its first meeting when Barret addressed Congress again on February 21, but he undoubtedly would have had knowledge of the delegates who were elected and a general understanding of the positions they would take. When the state convention voted whether or not to leave the Union on March 4, its delegates voted 98 to 1 against secession. Like Barret, they also expressed support for the Corwin Amendment.³⁸ What exactly Barret knew about the convention cannot be completely determined in the absence of any personal letters or diaries in his handwriting, but the looming decision on secession back home would have weighed on his mind as he attempted to convey Missouri's stance towards the Union to his fellow Congressmen.

Address to Congress on Secession

When February 21 arrived, Barret rose to the speaker's podium in the House of Representatives to make the most important speech of his life. He would address Congress for several hours and, similar to his comments at Lucas Market during the 1860 Congressional campaign, would criticize extremism from both northern and southern politicians. Barret's compelling oration that day presents a powerful portrait of unionism from the perspective of a border slave state politician.³⁹



Seven slaveholding states in the South had already seceded in February 1861, when Congress proved unable to reconcile the crisis over secession and slavery. In a last-ditch effort, a peace conference convened at the Willard Hotel to try to keep the eight remaining slaveholding states in the Union. Former president John Tyler headed the convention. (Images: Shappell Manuscript Foundation)

Barret opened his address with an appeal to history. He quoted from George Washington to argue that secession was unconstitutional. The Union was “indissoluble” and the Constitution was created to “induce [Americans] to forget their local politics and prejudices” in the interest of promoting one unified nation. From the beginning, however, antislavery northerners had disregarded Washington's desires and established antislavery societies “entirely upon local politics and prejudices, and with the avowed object of making war upon southern institutions.” Every time a serious national crisis over slavery emerged—the Missouri Compromise, the Wilmot Proviso, the Compromise of 1850, among others—antislavery agitation put the country's future in doubt. The

South, according to Barret, had been greatly harmed and forced to compromise rights “which even the Constitution would not justify . . . for Peace and for the Union.”

Barret argued that the current Republican party was an outgrowth of previous northern prejudices against slavery. It was not simply an opposition party but an extremist faction with treasonous designs. The party was “an organization wholly sectional in its character, determined upon effecting the ultimate extinction of slavery, regardless of plighted faith and national obligations.” “Two distinct classes” composed this party’s leadership, according to Barret. “The first is composed of the out-and-out, red-mouthed Abolitionists,” he thundered, “who believe that it is the right and duty of every slave to cut his master’s throat. These are the bold and desperate men who attempt to carry out practically the great leading ideas and moving principles of the Republican party.” If these abolitionists had their way, they “would have rejoiced to see John Brown President, Hinton Rowan Helper Vice President, and Dred Scott Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.” The most prominent “red-mouthed Abolitionists,” according to Barret, were “preachers of the Gospel, men making pretense of much true piety and Christian charity. . . . They carry the Bible in their hands, religion on their tongues, and hell in their wicked hearts.” Such preachers were a threat to the popular proslavery belief that slavery was a divine institution that would Christianize and civilize enslaved blacks.

Barret defined the second class as “cunning and ambitious politicians” who exploited antislavery sentiments for their own gain. These politicians embraced the “wicked, reckless, and lawless fanaticism of the Abolitionist” and deluded themselves into “the delicious idea that they were moving the cause of human rights, and of the equality of man.” Under these circumstances, many southerners believed a Republican president and a Republican majority in Congress “must result in the complete subjugation of the South, and the destruction of their institution of slavery.” Barret pleaded that Union-loving white southerners now “only ask their rights under the Constitution” and an amendment—the Corwin Amendment—to protect their slave property.

Barret then warned of another grave possibility in the country’s future: racial equality. Republicans actually held a range of views toward racial equality that are best viewed on a spectrum, with Frank Blair’s open racism and support for colonization of freed blacks on one end and Congressman Joshua Giddings’ belief in racial equality on the other.

These distinctions collapsed in Barret’s telling of the party’s intentions. Citing speeches by numerous Republicans, including President-elect Lincoln, he complained that the party aimed to “place the negro upon an equality with the white man.” When Lincoln argued that the Declaration of Independence’s proclamation that “all men are created equal” applied to people of all races and not just whites, he distorted the meaning of that clause and “reduced it to practice” in a way that it was never intended by the founders. “All men are created equal” only applied to white men, according to Barret, and it was condescending of Republicans to be “insulting the people of this country by explaining to them their Declaration of Independence.”

Equally troubling in Barret’s view was the Republicans’ focus on the Declaration of Independence—a statement of principles—instead of the Constitution, the nation’s actual governing document. The two documents seemed to create a conundrum for Republicans. “The Declaration,” he pointed out, “announces the fact that all men are created equal, and entitled to life, liberty, &c,” but “the Constitution returns the fugitive slave to his master.” Did the Constitution not embody the principle of “all men are created equal” to mean that all white men were created equal and entitled to the right to own slave property? “Our forefathers,” he argued, “never intended to establish a law paramount to the Constitution itself.” They never declared that “their own slaves [were] entitled to their freedom, and themselves law-breakers in holding them in bondage.” The effort to promote emancipation and racial equality would only lead to violent social chaos: “the establishment and encouragement of underground railroads . . . bloody strife in Kansas . . . incitement to civil war, and the excitement of servile insurrection.”

The distinction between opposing slavery in the western territories (the central plank of the party’s platform) and opposing slavery in states where it already existed (which most Republicans denied) did not exist in Barret’s address. By preventing slavery’s westward expansion, Republicans would stranglehold its growth and “create dissatisfaction among the slaves in the border States [and] induce them to seek refuge in the free States.” The mass flight of enslaved people into free states would render slave property “so insecure, unprofitable, and even dangerous, in the border States, that they will rid themselves of it; and once free, it is expected that those States will cooperate in making an amendment to the Constitution, providing for the ultimate extinction of slavery throughout the land.”

Barret then made a stunning transition and began criticizing the seceded southern states. Despite the machinations of the Republicans, the federal government had “done no wrong” to the South and in fact protected its interests. Destroying the Constitution was counterproductive when “all unite in the opinion that it is the best form of government ever instituted among men.” The Constitution protected minority interests and guaranteed limits on the power of an impassioned majority. Lincoln’s election had created “a national conservative element” that could keep his administration in check and, in Barret’s view, ensure his “certain termination at the end of four years” if only northern and southern Democrats could reunite in opposition. Secession, therefore, was “unwise and selfish, an irreparable injury to themselves, an act of cruel injustice to the middle and border slave States, to the General Government,” and the South’s “northern friends.” Additionally, leaving the Union “cannot render slave property more secure, or in any manner perpetuate it.” Giving up the Constitution’s protections for slavery would result in the “direst of all calamities,” emancipation, during a potentially bloody civil war. Had proslavery northerners and southerners united after Lincoln’s election, they would “make war, not against the Government, but its enemies; then might we fight, under the Constitution, against those who subvert it; fight for this beautiful capitol, hallowed in its very name, location, and in all its associations; fight for the archives, the flag, the honor of this great nation.” The seven southern states that had already chosen to secede made this possibility null and void.

Barret confessed that he was unsure of what the border slave states would do in the face of northern antislavery sentiment and southern secession. “But let the North be assured of one thing,” he warned. The “border States are unanimous in the opinion that this is a proper occasion for the settlement of this pest question of slavery, *now and forever*.” He then dramatically explained Missouri’s unique role within the secession crisis and offered another warning to the north:

Missouri occupies the geographical center of this nation; she lies in the very highway of civilization, and in the march of empire. She now contains a white population equal to that of Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, combined; and for her future greatness she looks to the North, to the South, to the East, and to the West. Sir, Missouri was born of the Union; she was rocked in the cradle of the Union; she has grown up, lived, and prospered

in the Union, and she loves the Union with unceasing devotion; but not a Union of the North with a fragment of the South, but the Union as our fathers made it—a Union of all the States in one grand and glorious Republic. Thus situated, thus interested, Missouri claims the right to criticize the conduct of her sister States, North and South. But, if the doctrine of coercion obtain, and the attempt be made to whip the cotton States into self-government, then Missouri will be found side by side with the other border slave States in armed resistance. And I now say to our Northern friends, beware. And I say this not in a spirit of menace, but of solemn warning.

Barret concluded his speech with additional critiques against the Republican party. He complained that the most radical of the party refused to compromise at all or give consideration to the Corwin Amendment. Equally bad in his mind was the idea that since Lincoln’s electoral victory came with a plurality of the popular vote, the administration could not claim to represent the consent of the governed. “This government is [now] a Government of force, of supreme power, of which . . . the consent of the white man forms no constituent element.” The burden was therefore on the Republicans to solve the secession crisis. “Shall every seven white men cut each other’s throats for the sake of one negro? . . . Shall this free, glorious, happy America throw away all her grand achievements. . . . Shall this model Republic, having no model on earth, cease forever to be an example worthy of study and imitation? These are important questions, and you alone can decide them.” Barret argued that he had done his part by supporting the efforts of the Committee of Thirty-Three. “I have had the honor of being taunted by men from the North, and men from the South, as a Union-saver,” he boasted. “Would that it were in my power, by a word, by a vote, by any act, by any sacrifice, to save this beautiful and holy house of our fathers; and that I could thus win this proud title, which, though bestowed in derision, is a title worth dying for, worth having lived for.” Any sacrifice, of course, except for the abolition of slavery in the United States.

On February 28, 1861, Barret was among a majority of Congressmen who voted in support of the Corwin Amendment, although it would never be ratified by the required three-fourths of the state legislatures.⁴⁰ The business of the 36th Congress came to a conclusion with the nation’s future unresolved and tensions between the United States and the new Confederate States of America rising. Abraham Lincoln would be inaugurated president

of a fractured Union on March 4. Barret returned to St. Louis empty-handed and defeated in his bid for peaceful compromise.

As the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter, Missourians faced the choice of who to support in a war seemingly provoked by extreme politics in other parts of the country. Barret chose to support the Confederacy. During the war he worked for General Sterling Price as a commissioner in negotiating prisoner exchanges and as a liaison between Price's Army of the Trans-Mississippi and the Confederate government in Richmond.⁴¹ He and his cousin, Dr. James A. Barret, also began associating with Joseph Wofford Tucker, a lawyer, Methodist deacon, newspaper editor, and fiery secessionist. Tucker formed a rogue military group during the war that worked to destroy U.S. and commercial property along the Mississippi River valley. According to historian George E. Rule, Barret was at one point accused of being "head of land operations" in Tucker's organization and encouraging members to destroy property and commit acts of

violence against Union soldiers, although the actual extent of his involvement in the group is unknown. Dr. James A. Barret, meanwhile, was arrested and held in a military prison for his involvement in the Order of American Knights—a secret group opposed to martial law, emancipation, and the entire Union war effort—until United States General Ulysses S. Grant, of all people, wrote a letter to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordering his release.⁴²

Little is known about Barret's life after the Civil War. A brief biography in an official directory of former Congressmen vaguely states that he eventually moved to New York City "and was engaged, among other occupations, in building docks." He died there on November 2, 1903, at the age of seventy-eight. He was interred back in his native Kentucky and currently rests at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.⁴³ John Richard Barret would never again serve in public office.

St. Louis lawyer John Richard Barret was serving his only term as Congressman for Missouri's First District when the first seven states seceded from the Union in the Winter of 1860–1861. Fearing the possibility of disunion and civil war, he gave this fiery speech to Congress twelve days before the expiration of his term and the inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln. Barret made a compelling argument favoring compromise over slavery's westward expansion and the maintenance of the Union. He condemned extremism from both "red-mouthed Abolitionists" in the North and proslavery fire-eaters in the South. He also correctly predicted that a long, bitter civil war would destroy the institution of slavery in the United States.

State of the Union

—
Speech of Hon. J.R. Barret,
of Missouri,
In the House of Representatives,
February 21, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

MR. BARRET said:

MR. SPEAKER: In 1783, George Washington, in a letter to the Governors of the Several States, used the following language:

“There are four things which I humbly conceive are essential to the well-being, I may even venture to say to the existence, of the United States as an independent power: 1. An indissoluble Union under our Federal head. 2. A sacred regard for public justice. 3. The adoption of a proper peace regulation. 4. The prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States which will induce them to forget their local politics and prejudices.”

In 1787, acting upon this advice from the Father of his Country, whom to love was the delight of the whole nation, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity, did ordain and establish our blessed Constitution. To say that those who formed that sacred instrument were good and great, is not enough. They seemed inspired from above—special messengers from the very throne of the Eternal; bearers of the high and holy mission of teaching to all the earth the true doctrines of self-government.

The Constitution, as a peace regulation, would, in all things, be complete; and the Union thus formed, under one Federal head, would be indissoluble, if there existed a sacred regard for public justice and such a friendly and pacific feeling among the people as to induce them to forget their local politics and prejudices.

George Washington seemed impressed with this idea when, in 1796, he, in the most affectionate, solemn, and earnest manner, warned his countrymen against every attempt to alienate one portion of the people from the rest, and enjoined upon all the constant love of liberty, and especially the preservation of the unity of the Government, as the palladium of our political safety and prosperity.

In utter disregard of the warnings and injunctions, in direct conflict with the spirit of the Constitution and the principles of public justice, a party was formed in the North, founded entirely upon local politics and prejudices, and with the avowed object of making war upon southern institutions. And in 1820, upon the application of Missouri for admission as a State, an issue, based upon geographical discriminations, was directly made, which endangered, even at that early day, the very existence of the Union. It may be well to call attention to the views of Mr. Jefferson, upon this proposition and the party making it, as he is one of the *fathers of the Republic*, to whom this anti-slavery party now delight to refer.

In a letter to Mr. Monroe, of March 3, 1820, he says:

“The Missouri question is the most portentous one which ever threatened our Union. In the gloomiest moment of the revolutionary war, I never had an apprehension equal to that I felt from this source.”

In his writings, volume seven, he says:

“The question is a mere party trick; the leaders of Federalism, defeated in their schemes of obtaining power, by rallying partisans to the principle of monarchism—a principle of personal, not of local division—

have changed their tact and thrown out another barrel to the whale. They are taking advantage of the virtuous feeling of the people to effect a division of parties by geographical lines; they expect this will insure them, on local principles, the majority they could never obtain on principle of Federalism.”

In a letter to Mr. Adams, January 22, 1821, he says:

“What does the holy alliance, in and out of Congress, mean to do with us on the Missouri question? And this, by the way, is but the name of the case: it is only the John Doe and Richard Roe of the ejectionment [*sic*]. The real question, as seen in the States afflicted with this unfortunate population, is, ‘are our slaves to be presented freedom and a dagger?’ For, if Congress has the power to regulate the conditions of the inhabitants of the States with the States, it will be but the exercise of that power to declare that all shall be free.”

In a letter to La Fayette, November 4, 1823, he says:

“On the eclipse of Federalism with us, although not its extinction, its leaders got up the Missouri question under the false front of lessening the measure of slavery, but with the real view of producing a geographical division of parties which might insure them the next President.”

To Mr. Holmes, April 22, 1820:

“I have been among the most sanguine in believing that our Union would be of long duration. I now doubt it much, and see the event at no great distance, and the direct consequence of this question. My only comfort and consolation is, that I shall not live to see it; and I envy not the present generation the glory of throwing away the fruits of their fathers’ sacrifices of life and fortune, and of rendering desperate the experiment which was to decide, ultimately, whether man is capable of self-government. This treason against human hope will signalize their epoch in future history as the counterpart of the model of their predecessors.

“This momentous question, like a fire-bell in the night, awakened me and filled me with horror. I considered it, at once, as the knell of the Union. It is hushed, indeed, for the moment; but this is a reprieve, only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper.”

For peace and for the Union, the South upon this question made a compromise of their rights which even the Constitution would not justify.

But this compromise did not secure peace. It was a “reprieve only,” and not a “final sentence.” It was but a temporary success of sectionalism, which encouraged more thorough organization. On the 30th of January, 1832, the Anti-slavery Society of New England was formed. This was an association, not professedly political, having for its object the abolition of slavery by moral means. The delightful amusement of witch-burning had been played out, and so industrious and puritanical a people could not remain idle. In 1848, these humanitarians, assisted by politicians, succeeded in getting up another national agitation, which once more threatened the Union, until peace was restored by the compromise of 1850. Afterwards, a union of politicians, with the various anti-slavery societies, formed the Republican Party, an organization wholly sectional in its character, determined upon effecting the ultimate extinction of slavery, regardless of plighted faith and national obligations.

This party is now under the management of two distinct classes. The first composed of the out-and-out, red-mouthed Abolitionists, who believe that it is the right and duty of every slave to cut his master’s throat. These are the bold and desperate men who attempt to carry out practically the great leading ideas and moving principles of the Republican Party. They are men who would have rejoiced to see John Brown President, Hinton Rowan Helper Vice President, and Dred Scott Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

MR. KILGORE: I desire to ask the gentleman a question.

MR. BARRET: I am unwilling to be interrupted. After concluding my remarks, I will answer any questions the gentleman may desire to ask.

MR. KILGORE: I wanted to ask if the gentleman includes all the members of the Republican Party in that category?

MR. BARRET: I decline yielding the floor. I say most prominent among this Abolition class, are preachers of the Gospel, men making pretense of much true piety and Christian clarity.

“When devils will their blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,”

“How smooth and even they do bear themselves!
As if allegiance in their bosoms sat,
Crowned with faith and constant loyalty.”

“They are meek, and humble mouth’d;
They sign their place and calling, in full seeming,
With meekness and humility.”

They carried the Bible in their hands, religion on their tongues, and hell in their wicked hearts. The

second class is made up of cunning and ambitious politicians. Believing it necessary to their success, they have succeeded in forming sectional parties—parties distinctly northern and southern, slavery and anti-slavery; and to this end they have employed with marked effect, the wicked, reckless, and lawless fanaticism of the Abolitionist; and to conceal just enough to catch the more moderate, and the good men who are sometimes found in the Republican Party.

I shall say nothing of the small demagogues and pitiful pettifoggers who make themselves so prominent now in the hour of party success. They are but light, surface material, drawn by the Republican current from every eddy. They are without size and substance, and float upon the tide; because its influx may raise, while its reflex can never lower them.

Under this management, the Republican Party has combined States against States, and arrayed section against section, until, by the power of numbers, by a section plurality, led on by party drill, and by the stimulus of pay and rations, and under the inducement of coveted honors, fat salaries, and the sweets of patronage, place, and power, and at the same time penetrated and fired with the delicious idea that they were moving in the cause of human rights, and of the equality of man, have succeeded in getting possession of the General Government.

The South, the defeated section, believing that this geographical party, in its very nature, is inimical to them, and that their main object in taking possession of the Government is to use all its powers and patronage in carrying out their leading idea—which must result in the complete subjugation of the South, and the destruction of their institution of slavery—have become alarmed, and they ask for further guarantees of their safety. They ask only their rights under the Constitution, but they want such explanatory amendments as will prevent the perversion of that instrument into the means of their own destruction.

Now, what is the leading idea, and have the southern people any cause for fear? In 1859, MR. SEWARD said of the Republican Party, of which he is the acknowledged leader and originator:

“The secret of its assured success lies in the fact that it is a party of one idea—the idea of equality; equality of all men, before human tribunals and human laws, as they are equal before divine tribunals and divine laws.”

On previous occasions he had used similar language. At Buffalo, in 1856, he said:

“If all men are created equal, no one can rightfully acquire or dominion over, or property in,

another man, without his consent. If all men are created equal, one man cannot rightfully exact the service of the labor of another man, without his consent. The subjugation of one man to another by force, so as to compel involuntary labor or service, subverts that equality between the parties which the Creator established.”

In the Senate, on the 11th of March, 1850, he said:

“All this is just and sound; but assuming the same premises—to wit, that all men are equal by the law of nature and of nations—the right of property in slaves falls to the ground; for one who is equal to the other cannot be the owner of property of that other. But you answer that the Constitution recognizes property in slaves. It would be sufficient, then, to reply, that the constitutional obligation must be void, because it is repugnant to the law of nature and nations.”

These sentiments had been proclaimed by the Anti-Slavery party in every convention, and they were not only disclaimed by the party at Chicago, but emphatically reasserted in the following resolution:

“That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, and embodied in the Federal Constitution, ‘that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,’ is essential to the preservation of republican institutions.”

To this bold enunciation of the Abolition doctrine of the party some timid man made objection; but this objection was soon dispelled by that great leader of the party, Mr. Giddings, of Ohio. He would not allow any dodging, and advocated the resolution with feeling. He said, and truthfully:

“The Republican Party was founded on this doctrine of negro equality; that it grew upon it, and existed upon it. When you leave this truth out, you leave the party.”

Mr. Curtis, of New York, in advocating the resolution, declared:

“That the words were truths by which the Republican Party lives, and upon which alone the future of this country in the hands of the Republican party is passing.”

In the nomination and election of Mr. Lincoln, the future of this country did pass into the hands of the Republican Party upon the doctrine of negro equality. Judging from his speeches, we must regard Mr. Lincoln as the very embodiment of the

sentiments of Mr. Giddings and Mr. Curtis, and of the Abolition party generally. Listen to his words at Chicago, in 1858:

“My friends, I have detained you about as long as I desired to do, and I have only to say, let us discard quibbling about this man or the other man, this race, that race, and the other race being inferior, and therefore must be placed in an inferior position, discarding our standard which we have left us; let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout the land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.”

He makes it still stronger in the same speech:

“My friends, I could not, without launching off upon some new topic, which would detain you too long, continue to-night. I thank you for this most extensive audience you have furnished me to-night. I leave you, hoping that the lamp of liberty will burn in your bosoms until there shall be no longer a doubt that all men are created free and equal.”

Afterwards, at Galesburg, Mr. Lincoln said:

“I believe that the entire records of the world, from the date of the Declaration of Independence up to within three years ago, may be searched in vain for a single affirmation, from one single man, that the negro was not included in the Declaration of Independence.”

Mr. Lincoln will not be content with an admission of the abstract equality of men, but wishes to reduce it to practice. The Illinois Journal, of September 16, 1856, contains the following, which is prefaced: “We are indebted to Mr. Lincoln for a verbatim report of the speech”:

“That central idea, in our political opinion, at the beginning was, and until recently continued to be, the equality of men. And although it was always submitted patiently to whatever inequality there seemed to be as a matter of actual necessity, its constant working has been a steady progress towards the practical equality of all men.

“Let past differences as nothing be; and with steady eye on the real issue, let us reinaugurate the good old central ideas of the Republic. We can do it. The human heart is with us; God is with us. We shall again be able, not to declare that all the States, as States, are equal, nor yet that all citizens, as citizens, are equal; but renew the broader, better declaration, including both these and much more, that all men are created equal.”—*Speech at banquet in Chicago*.

On the 10th of October, 1854, at Peoria, Illinois, he used the following language:

“What I do say is, that no man is good enough to govern another man without the other’s consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet anchor,

of American republicanism. Our Declaration of Independence says:

‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.’

I have quoted so much at this time merely to show that, according to our ancient faith, the just powers of Governments are derived from the consent of the governed. Now, the relation of master and slave is *pro tanto* a total violation of this principle. The master not only governs his slave without his consent, but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those which he prescribes for himself. Allow all the governed an equal voice in the Government; and that, and that only, is self-government.”—*Howell’s Life of Lincoln*, p. 279.

The stump orators in slave and free States all advocated the claims of Mr. Lincoln upon this doctrine of negro equality; and prominent among these was a Dutch upstart, who went city to city, insulting the people of this country by explaining to them their Declaration of Independence. If that Declaration did not mean to place the negro upon an equality with the white man, this is his opinion of that sacred instrument. I quote his own words:

“There is your Declaration of Independence, a diplomatic dodge, adopted merely for the purpose of excusing the rebellious colonies in the eyes of civilized mankind. There is your Declaration of Independence, no longer the sacred code of the rights of man, but a hypocritical piece of special pleading, drawn up by a batch of pettifoggers, who, when speaking of the rights of men, meant but the privileges of a set of aristocratic slaveholders, but styled it ‘the rights of man’ in order to throw dust in the eyes of the world, and to inveigle noble-hearted fools into lending them aid and assistance. There are your boasted revolutionary sires, no longer heroes and sages, but accomplished humbuggers and hypocrites, who said one thing and meant another; who passed counterfeit sentiments as genuine, and obtained arms, and money, and assistance, and sympathy, on false pretenses! There is your great American Revolution, no longer the great champion of universal principles, but a mean Yankee trick—a wooden nutmeg—the most impudent imposition ever practiced upon the whole world.”

Mr. Speaker, there are in the Declaration of Independence many self-evident truths. Why should the Chicago platform contain that one concerning

equality? Was it the expression of a sentiment honestly entertained, or was it a mere pretense to draw the honest elector into the support of the party by false pretense?

But they say these principles, promulgated in the Declaration, are embodied in the Constitution. The Declaration announces the fact that all men are created equal, and entitled to life, liberty, &c. The Constitution returns the fugitive slave to his master. Is this a case of principle, promulgated in the one and embodied in the other? Then, for which are the Republican party: for the promulgation or the embodiment?

Sir, I do not believe in that interpretation of our bill of rights. Our forefathers, in the promulgation of a great international principle of human freedom, never intended to establish a law paramount to the Constitution itself, declaring their own slaves entitled to their freedom, and themselves law-breakers in holding them in bondage. That there should be a prejudice against slavery in the minds of northern men, is but natural; and for it I make due allowance. But that prejudice has grown into a sickly sentimentality; into a wild, wicked, and dangerous fanaticism; into a social and political disease; a great national curse. And now, the cardinal doctrine, the great leading central idea, the fundamental principle of Republicanism, has become the equality of the negro with the white man. Hence the persistent denunciation of slavery in the States; hence the establishment and encouragement of underground railroads; hence the personal liberty bills; hence the bloody strife in Kansas; hence the devilish raids upon our border; hence the incitement to civil war, and the excitement of servile insurrection.

The Republicans believe that whether promulgated by the Declaration, or embodied in the Constitution, the negro is the equal of the white man, and entitled by the higher law to his freedom; that slavery is the sum of all villainies; that thieves are less amenable to the moral code than slaveholders; “that slavery is a sin against God and a crime against man, which no human enactment or usage can make right; and that Christianity and patriotism alike demand its abolition.” They believe, with MR. SUMNER, that—

“Slavery is a wrong so grievous and unquestionable, that it should not be allowed to continue; nay, that it should cease at once; nay, that a wrong so transcendent, so loathsome, so direful, must be encountered wherever it can be reached; and the battle must be continued without truce or compromise, until the field is entirely won.”

That it is the object of the Republican party to abolish slavery in the States, I need only read from the organs and leaders of the party, and from Mr. Lincoln himself.

The Chicago Democrat, of the 11th of August, 1860, is suggestive:

“Blair is a Republican of the radical school. He is a Republican of the Seward, the Sumner, and the Lincoln school. He believes in making the States all free. He believes slavery to be an evil and a curse, and that the duty of the Federal Government is to prevent its extension.

“While the great doctrine of the duty of the Federal Government to make ‘the States all free’ thus receives indorsement in a slaveholding State, shall the Republicans of the free States lower their standard of principle?

“The day of compromising, half-way measures, has gone by. The people are determined to force the politicians up to the point of making the States all free. If the politicians are not prepared for this, they must get out of the road. Unless they do, they will be run over.” * * * *

“The year of jubilee has come! Already is the child born who shall live to see the last shackle fall from the limbs of the slave on this continent. Universal emancipation is near at hand.

“The only class of people who are standing in the way of the accomplishment of this great work are the office-hunters—the fossils and the flunkies of the North. They cannot, or will not, see that the path of duty is the path of safety; and they prefer party to principle. Such men would have the Republican party in the free States lower its standard, and pretend not to be devoted to the extinction of slavery everywhere, while our gallant Republicans in the slave States are winning victories upon this very principle, in the face of the slave power.

“But the great heart of the Republican masses revolts against such hypocrisy and such truckling. They throw their banner to the breeze, inscribed with Lincoln’s glorious words, ‘The States must be made all free,’ and under it will march on to victory after victory, conquering and to conquer.”

In October, 1855, Mr. Seward said:

“Slavery is not and never can be perpetual. It will be overthrown either peacefully and lawfully under this Constitution, or it will work the subversion of the Constitution together with its own overthrow.”

Helper, in a work indorsed by sixty-eight members of this Congress, has fully exposed the intentions of his party. He says:

“But we are wedded to one purpose, from which no power can divorce us. We are determined

to abolish slavery at all hazards, in defiance of all opposition, of whatever nature, which it is possible for the slaveocrats to bring against us. Of this they may take due notice, and govern themselves, accordingly.”—page 149.

“Abolition is but another name for patriotism, magnanimity, reason, prudence, wisdom, religion, progress, justice, and humanity.”—page 118.

“The oligarchs say we cannot abolish slavery without infringing upon the right of property. Again we tell them we do not *recognize property in man*. * * * *

“Impelled by a sense of duty to others, we would be fully warranted in emancipating all the slaves *at once*, without any compensation whatever to those who claim to be their absolute owners.”—Page 123.

“Of you, the introducers, aiders, and abettors of slavery, we demand indemnification for the damage our lands have sustained on account thereof: the amount of damage is \$7,544,118,825; and now, sires, we are ready to receive the money, and if it is perfectly convenient to you, we would be glad to have you pay it in specie. It will not avail you, sires, to parley or prevaricate. We must have a settlement. Our claim is just, and overdue.” * * * *

“It is for you to decide whether we are to have justice peaceably, or by violence, for, whatever consequences may follow, we are determined to have it, one way or the other. Do you aspire to become the victims of white non-slaveholding vengeance by day, and of barbarous massacres by the negroes at night?

“Would you be instrumental in bringing upon yourselves, your wives, and your children, a fate too horrible to contemplate? Shall history cease to cite as an instance of unexampled cruelty the massacre of St. Bartholomew, because the South shall have furnished a more direful scene of atrocity and carnage? Now, sirs, you must emancipate them, speedily emancipate them, or we will emancipate them for you.”—Pages 126, 128.

“The great revolutionary movement which was set on foot in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, May 20, 1775, has not yet terminated, nor will it be, until every slave in the United States is freed from the tyranny of his master.”—Page 95.

“But we are wedded to one purpose, from which no earthly power can divorce us. We are determined to abolish slavery, at all hazards, in defiance of all opposition, of whatever nature which it is possible for the slaveocrats to bring against us. Of this they may take due notice, and govern themselves accordingly.”—Page 149.

“The pro-slavery slaveholders deserve to be at once reduced to a parallel with the basest criminals

that lie fettered within the cells of our public prisons.”—Page 158.

“No opportunity for inflicting a mortal wound in the side of slavery shall be permitted to pass us unimproved. Thus, terror-engenderers of the South, have we fully and frankly defined our position. We have no modifications to propose; no compromises to offer; nothing to retract. Frown, fret, foam, prepare your weapons, threat, strike, shoot, stab, bring on civil war, dissolve the Union. Sirs, you can neither foil nor intimidate us; our purpose is as firmly fixed as the eternal pillars of heaven; we have determined to abolish slavery, and, so help us God, abolish it we will.”—Page 187.

As early as 1837, Mr. Lincoln seemed as sound on some of these propositions as Helper. He was then a member of the Illinois Legislature; and on the 12th of January Mr. Ralston introduced the following resolutions:

“Resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Illinois, That we highly disapprove of the formation of abolition societies, and of the doctrines promulgated by them.

“Resolved, That the right of property in slaves is sacred to the Slaveholding States by the Federal Constitution, and that they cannot be deprived of that right without their consent.”

Mr. Lincoln voted against them. (See *House Journal*, p. 243.) In 1839, still a member of the Legislature, he voted against the following resolution:

“That the General Government cannot do indirectly, what it is clearly prohibited from doing directly; that it is the openly declared design of the Abolitionists of this nation to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, with a view to its ultimate abolishment in the States;” * * * * “and that, therefore, Congress ought not to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.”—*House Journal*, Page 126.

Such votes, such expressions, by the President elect and his party, leave us no longer in doubt as to their intentions; and what Mr. Clay said of the anti-slavery party in 1838, is true of the Republican party in 1861. We have only to insert New Mexico, in place of Florida, to make the application complete.

“With the Abolitionists, the rights of property are nothing; the deficiency of the powers of the General Government are nothing; the acknowledged and incontestable powers of the States are nothing; civil war, a dissolution of the Union, and the overthrow of the Government in which are concentrated the fondest hopes of the civilized world, are nothing. A single idea has taken possession of their minds,

and onward they pursue it, overlooking all barriers, reckless and regardless of consequences. With this class the immediate abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and in the Territory of Florida, the prohibition of the removal of slaves from State to State, and the refusal to admit any new States comprising within their limits the institution of domestic slavery, are but so many means conducing to the accomplishment of the ultimate but perilous end at which they avowedly and boldly aim, are but so many short stages in the long and bloody road to the distant goal at which they would finally arrive. Their purpose is abolition, universal abolition—peaceably, if they can; forcibly, if they must.”—*Appendix Globe*, vol. 7, p. 355.

I know that many of the Republican party shrewdly disavow any intention to interfere directly with slavery in the States. It would be too great a strain of the higher law, even, to justify so flagrant an outrage. But the same object can be accomplished indirectly. Admit no more slave States. Then, according to MR. SUMNER, “slavery will die, like the poisoned rat, of rage, in his hole.” Create dissatisfaction among the slaves in the border States; induce them to seek refuge in the free States; prevent their recapture and return, by personal liberty bills; and slave property will be thus rendered so insecure, unprofitable, and even dangerous, in the border States, that they will rid themselves of it; and once free, it is expected that those States will cooperate in making an amendment to the Constitution, providing for the ultimate extinction of slavery throughout the land.

Abolition of slavery, directly or indirectly, is demanded by the people of the North. Men high in authority, leaders of party, preachers, teachers, editors, judges, lawyers, law-makers, State and national, openly avow it; and no scheme has yet been suggested, however unconstitutional; no plan has yet been attempted, however wicked and infernal, which looked towards the freedom of a negro, which has not met with approval in the ranks of the Republican party. Many of that party believe that the design of John Brown was founded in the deepest wisdom and benevolence, and executed in unrivaled heroism, integrity, and self-forgetfulness; that his life was a complete success, his death an unparalleled and most honorable triumph; that the blood of John Brown appeals to God and humanity against slaveholders; that the heart of this nation, and of the civilized world, will respond to that appeal in one defiant shout: “resistance to slaveholders is obedience to God.”

John Brown was a true, practical Republican. He considered the negro an equal of the white man. He believed slavery a sin against God, and a crime against man. He believed in the insurrectionary and bloody schemes promulgated by the distinguished members of this Congress. He believed with the Republicans of Natick, “that it was the right and the duty of slaves to resist their masters, and the right and duty of the people of the North to incite them to resistance, and to aid them in it.” Theodore Parker says:

“John Brown sought by force what the Republican party works for with other weapons; the two agree in the end, and differ only in the means.”

I know that there are many members of the Republican party who blame John Brown. Of such I may say:

“They know the right, and they approve it, too; Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

The Republican party has one million eight hundred and fifty-eight thousand two hundred voters in the North, and only twenty-seven thousand and thirty voters in the South. It could hardly be more sectional. They have gained possession of the Government. As to what will be their policy, we can judge only from the sentiments expressed by their leaders and their party organs.”

On the 13th day of August last, MR. SEWARD used the following language, which, from him, and under the circumstances, is full of meaning:

“What a commentary upon the wisdom of man is given in this single fact that, fifteen years only after the death of John Quincy Adams, the people of the United States, who hurled him from power and from place, are calling to the head of the nation, to the very seat from which he was expelled, Abraham Lincoln, whose claim to that seat is that he confesses the obligation of that high law which the sage of Quincy proclaimed, and that he avows himself, for weal or woe, for life or death, a soldier on the side of freedom in the irrepressible conflict between freedom and slavery.”

He afterwards said:

“I tell you, fellow-citizens, that with this victory comes the end of the slave power in the United States.”

Helper, on Page 183 of his book, reduces this sentiment of his distinguished leader into a more practical shape. He says:

“Once for all, within a reasonably short period, let us make the slaveholders do something like justice to their negroes, by giving each and every one of them his freedom and sixty dollars in current money.”

The wheels of Government are to be moved with a high hand. For years we have been warned of this intention. MR. SEWARD said, in the Senate, March 3, 1858:

“Let the Supreme Court recede. Whether it recede or not, we shall reorganize that court, and thus reform its political sentiments and practices, and bring them into harmony with the Constitution and the laws of nature.”

Massachusetts, through one of her distinguished Senators, [MR. WILSON,] sustained this doctrine:

“We shall change the Supreme Court of the United States, and place men in that court who believe, with its immortal Chief Justice, John Jay, that our prayers will be impious to Heaven while we support and sustain human slavery.”

Through one of her Representatives, [MR. BURLINGAME,] she has gone even further:

“When we shall have elected a President, as we will, who will not be the President of a party, but the tribune of the people, and after we have exterminated a few doughfaces from the North, then, if the slave Senate will not give way, we will grind it between the upper and nether millstones of our power.”

From these and many like expressions of the leaders of the Republican party, the southern people have concluded that the administration of Mr. Lincoln will abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; that they will prevent inter-slave trade, restrict slavery in all the Territories, reorganize the Supreme Court, and put the Government actually and perpetually on the side of freedom.

I know that it is claimed that the only object of the Republican party is to prohibit slavery in the Territories. And, according to the gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. SHERMAN,] no sane man would for a moment suppose that slavery could ever go north of the 36° 30', and hence the only practical issue was, as to the existence of slavery in New Mexico. This, then, is a statement of the case. Two different forms of labor exist in the country, bond and free. The Constitution does not prescribe, or proscribe, either, for the Territory of New Mexico. The people of the South claim the right to take their bondmen into New Mexico. The people of the North deny the existence of any such right. Upon a fair submission of this question to the voters of the country at the election November last, there were, in the free states, 1,574,091, and in the slave States, 1,257,195,—total 2,831,286 voters, who were of opinion that a citizen of the United States had a right to take his bondmen into New Mexico, or any other Territory of the United States; while there were in the free States 1,858,200, and in the slave, 27,032, voters—total,

1,885,232, who were of a different opinion. This opinion of the South had already been sustained by a decision of that august tribunal, the Supreme Court of the United States, which, by the very Constitution, is a coordinate branch of this Government, and its decisions are final, and the supreme law of the land. There are not more than seven slaves now in New Mexico, and such are in its climate and soil that it cannot possibly be a free State; and yet, the gentleman from Ohio considers the question of slavery in New Mexico the all-important one upon which, as he says, the Union is being disrupted, and State after State is going out.

Was it the whole end aim of the Republican party to make this Territory free? Was it for this that nearly three million people placed themselves upon sectional ground, and arrayed North against South? Was it for this that they went through with a protracted, expensive, and laborious canvas? Was it for this that they brought about a sectional agitation, a hostile feeling, which threatens the very existence of the Union? Was it for this that they sought the possession of the General Government, and the reorganization of the Supreme Court? I deny that such a respectable number of Republicans even, however excited, however prejudiced, could be so greatly moved by so pitiful an object. If the position of the gentleman from Ohio be correct, the existence of the Republican party is dependent upon the *status* of New Mexico on the slavery question, and the determination of that would, as a matter of course, put an end to the politics of that party, and to the party itself.

The gentleman from Ohio is not the only distinguished Republican who believes that the sole object of his party is the prohibition of slavery in the Territories; nor do I stand alone in the opinion that, if that be true, the party must soon cease to exist. Mr. Bates, of Missouri, a prominent candidate before the Chicago convention for President, thus spoke in the rotunda at St. Louis, August 10, 1856:

“The Republican party is not a mere array of men. It is a hasty agglomeration made up of the odds and ends of every other party that ever existed at the North. MR. SEWARD, ever an eminent Whig and unquestionably a man of ability, is one of its leaders. He was that distinguished Whig, he is that distinguished Republican. At the North, whole slabs of the American party have united with the new organization, and it is now animated by an ardent enthusiasm which furnishes proof of its transitory nature. In proportion to its ardor will be the shortness of its life. Its only aim is the prohibition of slavery

in the Territories; and even if it should succeed in accomplishing its object by a congressional enactment, its whole force and vitality would be exhausted in the effort, and it would decline.”

Of this party, MR. H. WINTER DAVIS, the distinguished member from Maryland, and a candidate for the Vice Presidency in the Chicago convention, spoke as follows, in this House, January 6, 1857:

“The Republican party was a hasty levy *en masse* of the northern people to repel or revenge an intrusion by northern votes alone. With its occasion it must pass away. Within two years, Kansas must be a State of the Union. She must be admitted with or without slavery, as her people prefer. Beyond Kansas, there is no question that is practically open. I speak to practical men. Slavery does not exist in any other Territory, it is excluded by law from several, and not likely to exist anywhere; and the Republican party has nothing to do, and can do nothing. It has no future. Why cumberers it the ground?”

Sir, the restriction of slavery in the Territories is but one of the means. The great end to be accomplished is, as Mr. Lincoln says, the ultimate extinction of slavery. At any rate, the South fears that this is the object, and that the whole power and patronage of the Government will be used in its accomplishment; and moved by this fear, and by actual wrongs, the cotton States, exercising the right claimed by Massachusetts in 1814, and afterwards upon the annexation of Texas, have thrown off their allegiance to this Government and declared their independence.

It is not to be denied that the seceding States, yea, the whole South, have been subjected to a long train of abuses by the anti-slavery party. An incessant war has been made upon them, because slaveholders; their constitutional rights have been denied them; their slaves constantly interfered with; and laws made for their protection have been purposely obstructed; and now, it would seem to be the purpose of this anti-slavery Republican party, not only to destroy the value of \$4,000,000,000 worth of their property, but to convert it into the means of their own destruction. In vain have they warned the northern people against this unholy crusade; in vain have they remonstrated against the obstruction of the laws; in vain have they appealed to the generous sympathies of their brethren, asking only for the peaceful enjoyment of rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Their warnings, remonstrations, and appeals, have been answered only with repeated injuries. Wrongs like these, if inflicted by the Government, would be just cause for revolution. Such grievances could only be

redressed by a resort to arms. But this Government has done no wrong. There is no complaint against the Government. On the contrary, all unite in the opinion that it is the best form of government ever instituted among men. The southern confederacy have adopted it; and now, after our dismemberment, it is the only plan of government upon which there is the slightest hope for a reconstruction.

But besides, the Government has provided a mode of redressing the grievances which this sectional minority has imposed upon the South. The very election which raised a sectional President into power, manifested the existence of a national conservative element which insured a constitutional check upon his administration, and its certain termination at the end of four years. An opposition which, if united, could have defeated that election, could surely have protected themselves, under the Constitution and in the Union, against the aggressions of any sectional minority.

Under these circumstances, I now enter my solemn protest against the action of the seceding States. It was, in my opinion, unwise and selfish, an irreparable injury to themselves, an act of cruel injustice to the middle and border slave States, and to the General Government, and of gross ingratitude to a million and a half of gallant men of the North, who have made every sacrifice and dared every danger in support of the Constitution and in defense of southern rights. Has it ever recurred to our precipitate brethren of the South that those northern friends, like themselves, owe allegiance to their respective States, and that, by secession, they leave a noble army of northern conservatives, with all their valor and devotion, to be swept down by the assaults of resistless numbers, to rise no more forever? By this hasty act, they have forced upon the border States the fearful alternative of submission, on the one hand, to a power which could at any moment override all their rights; or rebellion, secession, and civil war, on the other, which in their exposed position, would be their utter ruin. In my judgment, such a respectable number of States, so vast in extent, with a population so large, and an interest so great, were entitled to some consideration at the hands of those States for which, in all their struggles against northern aggression, they had been a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

But this disunion, while it may bring upon the country the direst of all calamities, is a remedy for no evil, real or imaginary. It cannot render slave property more secure, or in any manner perpetuate it. It yields up forever the equal participation in the Territories by the slave States, while it furnishes

no greater protection for slavery where it exists. In the Union, the South, with a minority North, were stronger than even a united South could possibly be out of the Union, with or without arms. The cotton States should, therefore, have remained in the Union. Then, if this northern party—formerly Abolition, now Republican—should attempt to reorganize the Supreme Court, and make of it a machine to sustain their bad morals and worse politics; if they should fasten upon the Government the doctrine of the higher law, and employ all its patronage and power in an organized and direct attack of the higher law, and employ all its patronage and power in an organized and direct attack upon slavery, then would we make war, not against the Government, but against its enemies; then might we fight, under the Constitution, against those who would subvert it; fight for this beautiful capitol, hallowed in its very name, location, and in all its associations; fight for the archives, the flag, the honor of this great nation.

But, whether secession, disunion, revolution—call it what you will—be right or wrong, is not now the question. It exists; it is all around and about us. It has shocked and unsettled every department of Government, and paralyzed business in all its branches. Its baleful influence has spread sorrow and gloom, disaster, and destitution, over the whole land.

The question now is: what shall be done to restore peace, happiness, and prosperity? Who can, who will save the country from the threatened doom?

The gentleman from Ohio [MR. SHERMAN] appealed to the border States to “arrest the tide, which, but for them, would in a few days place us in hostile array against each other.” Believing that the border States, free and slave, understood practically this question of slavery, about which the pestiferous States of South Carolina and Massachusetts only theorize, I took upon myself the responsibility of calling those States together, that they might counsel with each other.

The committee appointed by those States agreed almost unanimously upon a plan of adjustment; but when that plan was in substance proposed in the House of Representatives, the gentleman and his party voted unanimously against its consideration. At that time the border slave States occupied a position for effective interference; but the rejection of a proposition so reasonable, so just, weakened their confidence in their northern brethren. And that confidence was not in the slightest restored by the gentleman from Ohio, when, in a speech “alternately gentle as the dews and as boisterous as the thunder,” he accompanies his pleas for peace with a recommendation of war, and meets all propositions of

conciliation with promised adherence to the Chicago platform.

It is difficult to tell what these border States will do. The elections lately held are no proper indices of their intentions. Having large interests involved, they take time for consideration. Although not consulted by the cotton States, they choose to consult one another. But let the North be assured of one thing: that those border States are unanimous in the opinion that this is a proper occasion for the settlement of this pest question of slavery, *now and forever*.

But, sir, while I can speak for no other, I can say but little even for my own State. Missouri occupies the geographical center of this nation; she lies in the very highway of civilization, and in the march of empire. She now contains a white population equal to that of Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, combined; and for her future greatness she looks to the North, to the South, to the East, and to the West. Sir, Missouri was born of the Union; she was rocked in the cradle of the Union; she has grown up, lived, and prospered in the Union, and she loves the Union with unceasing devotion; but not a Union of all the States in one grand and glorious Republic. Thus situated, thus interested, Missouri claims the right to criticise the conduct of her sister States, North and South. But, if the doctrine of coercion obtain, and the attempt be made to whip the cotton States into *self-government*, then Missouri will be found side by side with the other border slave States in armed resistance. And I now say to our northern friends, beware. And I say this not in a spirit of menace, but of solemn warning.

Long before the 6th of November, South Carolina declared that she would not submit to the election of a sectional President. This was treated as an idle threat; and the taunting reply was, that South Carolina could not be kicked out of the Union. When Congress assembled, and it became evident that she would secede, and would, most likely, be followed by all the other cotton States, the country was suddenly awakened to the real danger, and was at once convulsed with fear. In the Senate, and in this House, committees were constituted, of able men, and the many propositions looking to the safety of the country were laid before them, but nothing of a practical nature was accomplished. In the emergency, all eyes are turned to the distinguished Senator from New York, believing that he who had raised could easily rule the storm. After many long weeks of painful anxiety, that Senator comes forward and coolly tells us that all this is nothing more than might be expected; that in two or three years, when the lightening-flash and the thunder-clap have

subsided into a perfect calm, he may recommend something in the shape of a small Franklin rod for the protection of the people. Like a physician called to see a patient, writing, almost, with the agonies of death, he furnishes no remedy for relief, but delivers a very learned lecture on the subject of pathology in the sick room. The danger increases; State after State goes out; "The Union must and shall be preserved," is the borrowed eloquence of every Republican orator. The Government is disrupted, and civil war threatens the destruction of thirty million people and to cover the whole land with desolation. Our rulers tell us that they wish to test the strength of the Government; that they wish to see whether we have any Government at all. Commerce is destroyed, manufactures ruined, and business of all kinds prostrated; until the people, the rightful sovereigns of the nation, the makers of Government, and its rulers, are reduced by desperation to the humble position of petitioners, and, by thousands and by tens of thousands, they earnestly ask their own *servants* for concession, for compromise, for peace; to all which, they receive the slighting reply that *it is very likely that Mr. Lincoln will adhere to the Chicago platform*. And now, when the dreadful issue is forced upon us, and the question is: "Union or no Union; Constitution or no Constitution; Government or no Government; country or no country," the President elect says that "there is nothing wrong," that "nobody is hurt," "keep cool;" "there's no crisis; and if there is, it is all artificial;" while his Premier amuses himself and entertains the Senate by spinning cunning rhetoric into pointless platitudes and useless generalities.

Republicans, I once more give you warning. You have complete control of Congress, and in your hands rests the destiny of this nation. Your Chicago platform is not a panacea for all the ills which now afflict us. It was made in time of peace and prosperity, and not in time of revolution and adversity. It was intended only as a basis of party action, and admirably adapted to party ends. What if it should now be abandoned, utterly destroyed? Your Greeleys, your Searses, your Giddingses, could easily make for you another, and far better suited to the times. And now let me remind you that the election of your candidate for President was not the adoption of your platform. The disruption of the Democratic party, the dissatisfaction with the present Administration, and that restless spirit which always desires change, contributed to your success in procuring a plurality of the votes of your candidate, while there was a majority of nearly a million against your platform.

But you say that the flag has been dishonored,

the Constitution violated, the Union endangered, the Government defied; and you cry for war, and invoke the potential arm of Federal power to avenge all wrongs and enforce obedience. You forget that this is not a Government of force. The Union, so necessary to the establishment of the Government, was founded in the affections, which are stronger to bind a people together than any written Constitution or confederated authority. While this Government thus formed is all-powerful for good, it is impotent for evil. It was made for common defense and general welfare; but the Constitution does not provide for making war upon the very power that gave the Government existence. What if the misguided people of Charleston, in a moment of precipitation and excitement, did open a fire upon *their portion* of a common flag? What if they had blotted out the star which represents their own State—South Carolina? You now tolerate in your ranks hundreds of men who, but a few years ago, marched under a flag with only sixteen stars. Your Vice President elect has made speeches under such a flag. Your respect for the Constitution has greatly increased of late. It was a distinguished Republican who, but a short time ago, pronounced that Constitution the fountain of all our evils. And for years your party has taught obedience to a higher law, and not to the Constitution of the United States.

But, all at once, you have become great lovers of the union. You abuse disunion in others, while you tolerate men in your ranks who were willing to let the Union slide; men who have declared that they considered the Union a lie, an imposture, a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. If you so love the Union, why will you not do something to save it? Since there is no longer a question in regard to slavery in the Territories, the Republican party would have to fall back upon its abolitionism but for this Union question. And now, while they regard disunion as the best move ever made towards abolition, they find it necessary, for political effect, to pretend much devotion to the Union. But the other day, one of the Republican leaders said, "We can win on Union, but we cannot win on compromise." Have we come to this? Our difficulties are not to be adjusted, the Union is not to be saved, because the party in power wishes to convert the very distresses of the country into political capital.

Sir, we have indeed fallen upon strange times. But yesterday we were told that Governments were instituted among men, deriving all their just powers from the consent of the governed. That, inasmuch as the negro had not given his assent to this Government, his enslavement is a sin against God,

and a crime against man. Now, this is a Government of force, of supreme power, of which even the consent of the white man forms no constituent element. But a short time ago we were told by the Senator from New York that, between free and slave labor, there was irrepressible conflict; now he says, "that the different forms of labor, if slavery was not perverted to purposes of political ambition, need not constitute any element of strife in the Confederacy." But a short time ago we were told that it was necessary to protect the Territories from slavery, and to drive back the slave power which was threatening the invasion even of the free States. Now, says the great leader of the Republican party, "there is no fear of slavery anywhere; and the protection of the Territories from slavery has ceased to be a practical question."

Gentleman of the Republican party, this is no time for trifling; no time for diplomacy; no time for promoting political dogmas, and advancing partisan interests; no time for trying to preserve doubtful political consistency. Questions of grave moment force themselves upon you. Shall a sacrifice be made of our house, race, lineage, and blood, for those of a strange clime? Shall every seven white men cut each other's throats for the sake of one negro? Will you disregard all ties of consanguinity, and use all your endeavors to ruin then millions of the noblest race on earth, under the pretext of benefiting about one third that number of the most degraded? Shall this free, glorious, happy America throw away all her grand achievements, and tear from her brow the wreath of science, commerce, politics, and war, and no longer stand forth the loveliest of all the nations? Shall this model Republic, having no model on earth, cease forever to be an example worthy of study and imitation? These are important questions, and you alone can decide them. As I have before said, you hold in your hands the destiny of this great nation.

The formation of the Union by the adoption of the Constitution was celebrated with deep, passionate enthusiasm throughout the original colonies. "Tis done, we have become a nation," was the exultant boast of the whole people. And that was but the dawn of the day which promised glory and happiness to all our America. A few months ago that day was at noontide, and we in the full realization of all its blessed promises. If now, in our calamity, the same spirit of concession, compromise, and patriotism, which formed the Union, should secure its preservation and its establishment for all time as the palladium of our political safety and prosperity, and if that proud bird of liberty should once more take his flight, bearing the sacred motto of "*E Pluribus Unum*,"

in letters of ever-living light, the whole earth would be illuminated with joy and gladness. The loud shout of a freeman's exultation would break from the deep plains of California. Thirteen infant colonies rejoiced over the birth of this nation; thirty-four grown up States, empires within themselves, with their thirty million people, will rise up in one grand, national jubilee over its preservation. But if, in spite of all appeals, and regardless of all obligations, partisan feeling and small politics shall overrule concession, compromise, patriotism, be assured that whole columns of curses, rising from the bosoms of an agonized and outraged people, will ascend to Heaven against those who would not save, as against those who would destroy, a nation's happiness, a nation's prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, there are many propositions in the hands of the committee of thirty-three which would restore peace to this country, and I have done all in my humble power to secure their adoption. I have had the honor of being taunted by men from the North, and men from the South, as a Union-saver. Would that it were in my power, by a word, by a vote, by any act, by any sacrifice, to save this beautiful and holy house of our fathers; and that I could thus win this proud title, which, though bestowed in derision, is a title worth dying for; worth having lived for.

Source: *Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 2nd Session*, pages 246–50.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ulysses S. Grant, letter to “Mr. Davis,” August 7, 1860. Spellings are in the original. Quoted in John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Volume 1: 1837–1861* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1967), 357.
- ² Richard Edwards and M. Hopewell, *Edwards’s Great West and the Commercial Metropolis, Embracing a General View of the West, and a Complete History of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Trubner & Co., 1860), 450.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 453.
- ⁴ William E. Parrish, Clarence T. Jones, Jr., and Lawrence O. Christensen, *Missouri: The Heart of the Nation* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harland Davidson, Inc., 2004, 3rd edition), 106, 132, 134–35; Benton quoted in Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 56.
- ⁵ Parrish, et al., *Missouri*, 132–33.
- ⁶ Missouri General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, at the Extra Session of the Seventeenth General Assembly* (Jefferson City: James Lusk, Public Printer, 1852), 35; “The Speaking at Carondelet,” *Missouri Republican*, July 8, 1858.
- ⁷ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, at the Extra Session of the Seventeenth General Assembly*, 99–100, 116–21.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 519–21.
- ⁹ William E. Parrish, *Frank Blair: Lincoln’s Conservative* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 50–51; Barret quoted in U.S. Congress, *Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st Session*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1860), 400.
- ¹⁰ Missouri General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri at the First Session of the Eighteenth General Assembly* (Jefferson City: James Lusk, Public Printer, 1855), 6–7, 68; M. Hopewell, *Report of the Third Annual Fair of the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association of September, 1858* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Co., Book and Job Printers, 1859), 7–8, 211.
- ¹¹ Hopewell, *Report of the Third Annual Fair of the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association*, 222.
- ¹² Parrish, et al., *Missouri*, 153; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 60–69.
- ¹³ Blair quoted in Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 68, 71.
- ¹⁴ Parrish, et al., *Missouri*, 112; Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 67.
- ¹⁵ Benton quoted in Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 67.
- ¹⁶ Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown established the *Missouri Democrat* in 1852 to promote pro-Benton politics in St. Louis. Barret quoted in U.S. Congress, *Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st Session*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1860), 400.
- ¹⁷ “The St. Louis Nationals,” *Glasgow Weekly Times*, June 17, 1858. For more on the concept of popular sovereignty, see Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004).
- ¹⁸ A third candidate, Samuel Breckenridge, ran as an anti-immigrant Know-Nothing against Blair and Barret. The local newspapers offered scant coverage of his speeches, and at one point Breckenridge even complained that the two other candidates behaved during the debates as if he wasn’t there. Nevertheless, he finished with a respectable 5,668 votes, roughly 1,500 behind Barret, the winning candidate.
- ¹⁹ “Public Speaking at Laclede Station,” *Missouri Democrat*, July 2, 1858; “Hon. J. Richard Barret,” *Missouri Democrat*, July 3, 1858; “The Canvas,” *Missouri Democrat*, July 5, 1858; Thomas Hart Benton, *Historical and Legal Examination of that Part of the Decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Dred Scott Case* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857).
- ²⁰ [Illegible Headline], *Missouri Republican*, July 2, 1858; “The Speaking at Carondelet.”
- ²¹ “The Speaking at Carondelet”; “The Canvas—The Discussion at Manchester,” *Missouri Republican*, July 12, 1858.
- ²² “The Meeting at Allenton,” *Missouri Democrat*, July 8, 1858; “Why the Free Democracy Should be Sustained,” *Missouri Democrat*, July 8, 1858.
- ²³ “The Canvas—The Discussion at Manchester,”
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ “Democratic Meeting at Bridgeton,” *Missouri Republican*, July 14, 1858; “The Canvas—The Discussion at Creve Coeur,” *Missouri Republican*, July 17, 1858.
- ²⁶ Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 73.
- ²⁷ Barret also unsuccessfully lobbied to have the St. Louis Armory moved to nearby Jefferson Barracks during the first session, arguing that its location in the downtown area made it “a nuisance.” U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1860), 2327, 2419, 2474, 2605; Barret’s speech can be found in *Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st Session*, 362–65.
- ²⁸ Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 73; *Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st Session*, 2249, 2673, 2678–2681, 2761–73; *Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st Session*, 396–401.
- ²⁹ “Public Reception of Mr. Barret,” *Missouri Republican*, June 30, 1860.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² “Helperism and Blairism,” *Missouri Republican*, July 29, 1860; “Barret Meeting at North Market,” *Missouri*

Republican, July 31, 1860; “Meeting of Candidates at Bridgeton,” *Missouri Republican*, August 1, 1860; Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (New York: Burdick Brothers, 1857).

- ³³ “Barret and Blair,” *Missouri Republican*, July 29, 1860; “A Word to the Wise,” *Missouri Republican*, August 4, 1860.
- ³⁴ Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 86.
- ³⁵ That Barret, Jackson, and Douglas found themselves campaigning on the same ticket as “Douglas Democrats” was remarkable. Governor Jackson was one of the leading authors of the famous “Jackson Resolutions” of 1849 that Barret opposed while in the Missouri State Legislature. Jackson campaigned as a unionist during the 1860 gubernatorial election, but would later hint at his support for secession in his inaugural speech in January 1861 and lead the effort to take Missouri out of the Union as the Civil War broke out. Douglas, meanwhile, agreed with Frank Blair that the Lecompton Constitution in Kansas was a fraud, although he remained committed to popular sovereignty and the Democratic party. See Christopher Phillips, “Claiborne Fox Jackson,” *Civil War on the Western Border*. Accessed June 3, 2017, <http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/encyclopedia/jackson-claiborne-fox>; Norma L. Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise: The Political Career of B. Gratz Brown* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 84–85.
- ³⁶ Robert G. Gunderson, “The Washington Peace Conference of 1861: Selection of Delegates,” *The Journal of Southern History* 24, no. 3 (August 1958): 347–58.
- ³⁷ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1861), 476–77.
- ³⁸ Parrish, et al., *Missouri, 173–74; Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at*

Jefferson City and St. Louis, March, 1861 (St. Louis: George Knapp & Co., 1861).

- ³⁹ All forthcoming quotes from Barret’s address can be found in *Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 2nd Session*, 246–50, and reprinted following this article.
- ⁴⁰ “The Proposed Amendment to the Constitution,” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 2, 1861; for more on the Corwin Amendment, see Daniel W. Crofts, *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).
- ⁴¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series II, Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), 122, 542, 554, 559; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series II, Volume III* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), 932.
- ⁴² George E. Rule, “Tucker’s War: Missouri and the Northwest Conspiracy,” *Civil War St. Louis*. Accessed June 7, 2017. http://www.civilwarstlouis.com/History2/tuckerswar.htm#_ednref53; “Order of American Knights.” *The Civil War in Missouri*. Accessed June 7, 2017. <http://www.civilwarmemo.org/educators/resources/info-sheets/order-american-knights>; Ulysses S. Grant letter to Edwin Stanton, June 25, 1864. Quoted in John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Volume II: June 1–August 14, 1864* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1984), 128–29.
- ⁴³ James L. Harrison, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774–1949* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950), 818.