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Glenna Matthews. *The Golden State in the Civil War: Thomas Starr King, the Republican Party, and the Birth of Modern California.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xii + 272 pp. $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-19400-6; $25.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-107-63921-8.

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Lloyd on Matthews, *The Golden State in the Civil War*

Glenna Matthews's new monograph on the Civil War in California uses the experience of Massachusetts-born Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King as the lens through which to understand the Golden State's brief political shift to Republican Unionism during the war and, more broadly, the birth of modern California. Matthews argues that the wartime experience provided a break from the localism and racism-tinged states' rights of California's antebellum politics and that King's pro-Unionist oratory provided Californians with "an appreciative response to California's racial and ethnic diversity, a discourse that was pioneering at the time" (p. 3).

Matthews first provides a background on California politics in the 1850s, reminding readers that the state was dominated by the Chivalry, or "Chivs," a pro-Southern wing of the Democratic Party, especially outside of the Bay Area. California politics in the 1850s was largely a struggle between the Chivs and Free Soil Democrats. One of California's U.S. Senators in the 1850s was slave-owner William Gwin and Republicans garnered only 19 percent of the state's popular vote in the 1856 election. When the war broke out, Los Angeles was so pro-Southern that federal officer Captain Winfield Scott Hancock armed his wife because he feared for her safety. The area was dominated by groups like the Knights of the Golden Circle and the "El Monte Boys," a rough band of Texans who settled in the town of El Monte, east of Los Angeles at the end of the Santa Fe Trail. Matthews makes the case that Thomas Starr King, who moved to California in 1860, added a persuasive Unionist voice to California politics at a critical moment that buoyed the Republican Party. Matthews also makes a persuasive case that some $100 million in California gold and thousands of dollars raised by the state for the U.S. Sanitary Commission played a significant role in the Union cause. As Paul Kens has shown, Lincoln's 1863 nomination of Californian Stephen J. Field to a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court was a reflection of California's importance to the Union cause in the West. Matthews also devotes a chapter to the more than 16,000 California troops that served the Union cause in the war (though many of them it seems spent more time fighting Native Americans in California than Confederates).

Matthews does an admirable job delineating the dynamics of race in the Golden State during the war, an important dimension of the state's history. The state's nonwhite and non-anglo population all faced various forms of racism, exclusion, and discrimination, but there was little common cause made between them. Well-to-do Californios tended to align themselves with states' rights Democrats, African Americans and Asian immigrants could not overcome their cultural differences, and all, it seemed, shunned the state's Native American population.

Neither King nor the California Republican Party would direct California's political fortunes after the war, however. King died in 1864, and the Democrats regained their political strength by 1867, as white Californians balked at Radical Reconstruction measures and allegations of corruption. Significantly, Matthews argues that this Republican interregnum not only integrated California into the nation, but provided a brief historical moment when appreciation for a multiracial California, as articulated by orators like King, was allowed to flourish.

King could be paternalistic in matters of race, she argues, but he stands out as a rare Californian of the day who forthrightly celebrated what he called the "Providential good suggested by the diversity of race in our country" (p. 62).

It is this analysis of King and his role in Civil War California that is the most significant contribution of Matthews's study. King not only arrived in California at a propitious moment, but his connections to Eastern literati such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., made him something of a minor celebrity, according to Matthews. Moreover, King's friendship with prominent California Republicans like John C. and Jessie Benton Fremont, gave him entrée into important social circles in the state. As such, he was highly sought as a public speaker, and his speeches usually received generous press coverage. Thus Matthews shows that the introduction of this powerful New England antislavery voice helped shift California's political weight toward the Republican Party at the outbreak of the Civil War.

One notable aspect of California's Civil War experience that is worth exploration is California's political conservatism during the Civil War era. As Matthews notes, California's politics was dominated by pro-Southern Democrats in the 1850s, and, despite the best efforts of Thomas Starr King, California's Republican turn during the war years was short-lived and, it might be added, more Unionist than antislavery. Moreover, Matthews herself shows that there was always a strong "coppery" (that is, pro-Southern) element in the state during the war, causing concern among the Union military authorities. Thus the Republican Party's hold on California was tenuous at best, and in 1867 the state went back into the Democratic column in reaction to congressional Reconstruction measures such as the Fourteenth Amendment. In fact, California's legislature refused to ratify either the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Amendments until well into the twentieth century, despite the fact that these measures represented the very legal equality that Thomas Starr King preached when he was alive. One doubts that even King, had he lived, could have held back California's reactionary racial politics during Reconstruction.

In sum, Glenna Matthews has written a fine addition to the literature on California during the Civil War. Her attention to the issue of racial diversity in California during the Civil War is significant, and her highlighting of the role of Thomas Starr King adds an important dimension to our understanding of the state's Civil War politics. That said, one cannot help but question whether the extent of King's influence is not somewhat overstated in her analysis. Larger events seem to have had far more influence on the shifts in California's political winds between 1860 and 1867 than did King. Moreover, one wishes a bit more attention had been paid to California politics during Reconstruction, insofar as the struggle over the meaning of the war, especially in regard to race and citizenship, took place during that fraught period of time. By lengthening the chronology of her study to include more on Reconstruction, King's prominence in her narrative would have been reduced, but a fuller picture of "the birth of modern California" might have been gained.

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