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Article Summary: James D Calhoun spent twenty-five years, from 1869 to 1894, in southeast Nebraska working as a newspaperman and laboring in Democratic Party politics. His congeniality enabled him to get along with a wide variety of people. As an artful storyteller, Calhoun could delight his friends and readers with wonderful anecdotes, sometimes blurring reality and fiction. His contributions to the history of Lincoln and the state remain largely in the back files of Nebraska newspapers.

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Photographs / Images: Main Street, Brownville, about 1869; James D Calhoun, published July 18, 1915; J Sterling Morton; Albert Watkins, Lincoln postmaster 1885; P Street, Lincoln, 1893; William Jennings Bryan, 1890

FROM BROWNVILLE TO BRYAN

Journalist James D. Calhoun in Nebraska 1869-1894

By Patricia C. Gaster

Brownville, Nebraska, was in the late 1860s a flourishing western city, the “liveliest, thrivingest, grow-biggest and fastest town of its size on the Missouri.” Its traditional river trade continued as rumors of the imminent arrival of a railroad raised the town’s hopes of becoming a major transportation center. Brownville’s first newspaper, the *Nebraska Advertiser*, established by Robert W. Furnas in 1856, was later joined by others, including the *Brownville Democrat*, established July 11, 1868, by Andrew S. Holladay, a Brownville physician, and George W. Hill.¹ Less than a year later the *Democrat* was being edited by an ex-Confederate soldier and newspaperman who had left the South after the Civil War for the booming new state of Nebraska.

James D. Calhoun spent the next twenty-five years, from 1869 to 1894, in southeast Nebraska, chiefly in Nemaha, Franklin, and Lancaster counties, working as a newspaperman and laboring in Democratic Party politics. Fellow Democratic journalist George L. Miller remembered him in 1902 as a “large-minded and generous-hearted” veteran of the state press.² Although his early and enthusiastic support of William Jennings Bryan in the pages of the *Lincoln Weekly Herald* was probably the highlight of his career in Nebraska, it brought him no immediate political reward. The prize Calhoun sought, the Lincoln postmastership in 1894, was given to a less controversial candidate despite Bryan’s efforts on his behalf.

Born of Scotch-Irish ancestry in Talbot County, Georgia, in 1843, Calhoun as a child moved with his parents to Louisiana. His father died when Calhoun was eleven. He learned the printing trade and was attending college when the Civil War broke out. Enlisting on the Confederate side, he reached the rank of corporal by the end of the war.³

Following the war Calhoun entered the newspaper field. Several years later he migrated north and was in Brownville by mid-1869 as editor of the *Brownville Democrat*. An accidental shooting in which Calhoun badly wounded nineteen-year-old Frank Parish (who later died) while the two were hunting game birds with pistols on the Fourth of July in 1869 is among the earliest known indications of Calhoun’s presence in Brownville. It is confirmed by an incident that occurred in August of 1869.

Jacob Baer, a Brownville express agent, addressed a written admission of guilt for a local express robbery to “Holladay & Calhoun” of the *Brownville Democrat*.⁴

The *Democrat* started a four-page daily edition edited by Calhoun and Frank M. Vancil on July 19, 1870. An editorial in the July 24 *Democrat* congratulated the appearance of *The Daily Nebraska State Journal* at Lincoln on July 20, making it one day younger than the daily edition of the *Democrat*.⁵

Calhoun was associated with the Democratic Party almost as soon as he arrived in the state. Besides his work in the Democratic press, he served as a Nemaha County delegate to the Democratic state convention in Plattsmouth in September of 1870. He served as permanent convention secretary, a member of the committee on resolutions, and a member of the Democratic state central



Main Street, looking east, Brownville, about 1869. RG3190-50

Patricia Gaster, assistant editor of *Nebraska History*, has written previous articles about *Nebraska journalists*.

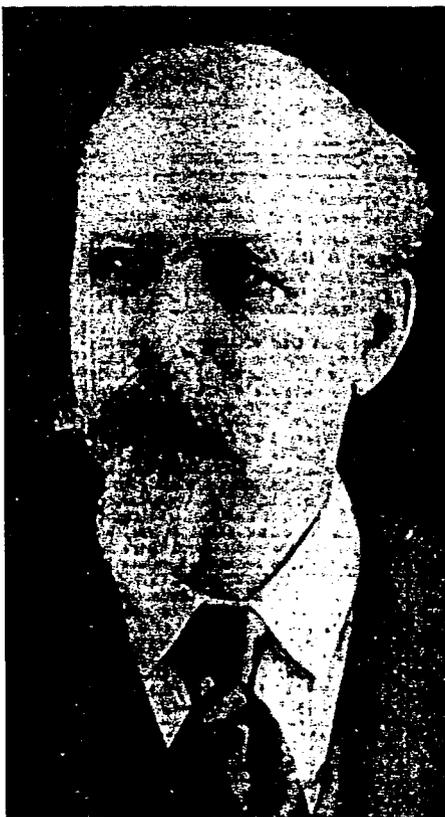
Journalist James D. Calhoun

committee. A "People's Reform Party of Nebraska" convention, held about the same time in Plattsmouth, undoubtedly attracted Calhoun's attention. Committees from the two conventions conferred on the nomination of candidates.⁶

An intense campaign followed. The *Democrat* was discontinued as a daily in October of 1870, probably as a result of what the paper termed "the fight that just closed so disastrously" for the Democrats, although it professed itself "satisfied with the influence our paper has yielded politically in a community differing with it in proportion of two to one." Republican Governor David Butler was reelected to a third term as governor of Nebraska, despite charges of misuse of state funds. (Articles of impeachment were preferred against him at the beginning of the term.) Calhoun accepted the Democratic loss philosophically. "We ought to have been beaten a good deal worse than we were," he confided to fellow Democrat J. Sterling Morton in November of 1870.⁷

Calhoun's reputation as a public speaker and political debater was growing. In April of 1871 he used his position on the Democratic state central committee to urge a united convention of Republicans and Democrats to nominate delegates to the constitutional convention of 1871 and spoke at Beatrice in the fall against the proposed constitution. In 1875 the *State Journal* remarked, "Mr. Calhoun is a clear-headed ready debater, sometimes warming up to some vehemence."⁸

Inevitably, Calhoun's political activities invited scrutiny of his war record. In Nebraska, where Union Civil War veterans, chiefly Republicans, greatly influenced state politics, a Democratic ex-Confederate attracted attention. When the *Nebraska Advertiser* asked rhetorically whether Calhoun might not again take up arms against the government, Calhoun replied that if the state of Nebraska saw fit to dissolve her connection with the federal government and call upon her sons for aid in arms, he would again become a rebel soldier.



James D. Calhoun. From a photograph published in *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915.

The *Nebraska Herald* at Plattsmouth charged that Calhoun's views were also those of some other Nebraska Democrats and noted: "Perhaps the people are ready to place such men in power, and perhaps not. We are inclined to the latter perhaps."⁹

Early in 1872 a company was organized in Brownville to locate a townsite in Franklin County. Brownville by this time was losing its luster as a trade center, and colonization of the Republican Valley was proceeding rapidly. Calhoun joined the town company as general agent; it also included his coeditor on the *Democrat*, Frank Vancil, who served as company vice-president. The new settlement was named Bloomington, for the Illinois town of the same name, and quickly became a rival for the county seat, which had been located at Franklin.¹⁰

Calhoun started the three-column *Bloomington Guard*, the first newspaper not only in Bloomington, but in the Republican valley. The first issue was dated August 30, 1872. In addition, he opened a steam sawmill that could also process corn and grist. A colleague on the *Beatrice Express* remarked, "He is the only editor we know of who is prepared to serve his readers with food for both mind and body."¹¹

Calhoun not only pursued business interests in Bloomington, but also homesteaded about 1873. The U.S. Land Office was removed from Lowell to Bloomington in 1874, the same year the town was made Franklin County seat, and Calhoun may have been employed at the land office.¹² Years later in the *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, under the title "Adventures of a Chump, A Brief and Busy Career as a Real Estate Agent," Calhoun described the downfall of "a young and ambitious homesteader [who] takes a whirl at fortune making in the maelstrom of Suckerfield." The townspeople there persuade him to try to sell their overvalued property, palm off overpriced newspaper advertising and office furniture, and finally drive the agent bankrupt. He flees town, leaving many unpaid debts. Although this cannot be strictly autobiographical, the bitterness that pervades it indicates that Calhoun probably had unfortunate experiences with land and real estate investments. In late 1884, he joked while on a trip to a booming section of western Nebraska, "Something sinister in my appearance causes me to be frequently mistaken for a land agent, and it is all I can do to withstand the temptation of selling a few sections, packing the cash allotment and doing the grand skip."¹³

In the spring of 1873 Calhoun sold the *Bloomington Guard* to J. R. Huffman. By 1874 his politics had shifted, perhaps due to the drought and grasshopper-induced "hard times" in Franklin County. Robert W. Furnas in April of that year mentioned Calhoun, "who with the Grangers stand," on a claim in the Republican valley, in his brief summary of the press history of

Nebraska to that date.¹⁴

Calhoun served as permanent secretary at the first Independent state convention, which met September 8, 1874, in Lincoln. Forty-three delegates represented fourteen counties. Presided over by Robert R. Livingston of Cass County, the group nominated the first Independent state ticket, including James W. Davis of Douglas County for Congress and Calhoun as contingent candidate for Congress. Later histories of Nebraska sometimes identify Calhoun at the 1874 convention as “John D.,” although contemporary newspapers refer to him with his preferred “J. D.”¹⁵

The convention seems to have been somewhat informal. Many of those attending were disaffected Republicans or Democrats. (Some, like Livingston and Experience Estabrook, had at one time or another belonged to both parties.) The Republican *State Journal* noted that the nomination for contingent congressman had been promised by the Independents to someone other than Calhoun. However, after criticizing the ills and disadvantages of the other Independent candidates, it said grudgingly, “Calhoun . . . is an old line Democrat, and nothing whatever ails him. He is the only healthy nag on the [Independent] course.”¹⁶ However, Republican victories in 1874 ended temporarily the political ambitions of Calhoun and the other Independent candidates.

The years between Calhoun’s gradual departure from Nemaha and Franklin counties and the beginning of his career with the *State Journal* about 1880 were ones of temporary jobs and much travel. He was married in 1875 in Brownville to Odus Alderman. Her father, Hiram D. Alderman, was a brother-in-law of town founder Richard Brown and one of the oldest settlers in Nemaha County.¹⁷

Calhoun appeared in Lincoln in 1875, where he worked on several short-lived papers, including the *Lincoln Blade* and the *Evening Star*.¹⁸ While a *Blade* employee early in 1875 Calhoun engaged in a typesetting race with William D. Padgett of the *Journal*. The five-

hour contest earned Calhoun as winner a purse of sixty dollars and a friendly gibe from the *Journal*, which remarked that until “quite recently he [Calhoun] has engaged in handling saw logs and doing other heavy work in and around a saw mill.”¹⁹

Calhoun’s colleague on at least one of these early ventures was Nathaniel W. Smails, later editor of the *Fremont Herald*. He recalled his days in Lincoln with Calhoun:

A company of us young printers, J. D. Calhoun, . . . , being one of them, established a little daily, which later became the *Evening Star*. . . . This had a checkered career for some months. During this period, Calhoun, then the “speediest” compositor in the state, I believe, did his principal editorial work “at the case,” with a fluency in prose and rhyme, rarely equaled since. He was the forerunner of the [A. L.] Bixby style of writing. In the early days of this last venture we changed the name of the paper with every issue, identifying it as being published by the “Variety Publishing Co.,” and the name at the masthead being usually supplied at the last minute by whomever was “handy” so it is difficult to give any consecutive history of this venture, which was more in the line of recreation.²⁰

In the fall of 1876 Calhoun worked as a compositor for several months for the weekly *Beatrice Express*. He attended the Gage County Democratic convention and served as a Gage County delegate to the Democratic state convention. A severe fall during a visit to Brownville relatives over Christmas of that year prevented his return to Beatrice. A year or two later he was working for the *Journal* as a printer while boarding in Lincoln.²¹

Calhoun returned to Bloomington about 1877 or 1878. Expectations of the imminent arrival of the Burlington Railroad had encouraged local business prospects after the drought conditions of several years before. A former resident of Franklin County, R. S. Proudfit, recalled in 1915, “He [Calhoun] was so personally popular in the county that although he was a democrat and frankly admitted that he had been a rebel, he came very nearly being elected county

clerk” in the fall of 1879. However, after a narrow defeat by M. F. Mahin, Calhoun returned to Lincoln, where he remained for the rest of his Nebraska years.²² He still retained at least 160 acres of land in Franklin County in the spring of 1882, when he advertised in the *State Journal* to sell this tract. The ad attracted a prospective purchaser that Calhoun and other *Journal* staffers later believed to be Jesse James.²³

About 1880 Calhoun relocated permanently to Lincoln. He wrote to J. Sterling Morton in August of that year, “Since I came here for a temporary stay—on act [account] of the drouth—I have added to the board problem the connundrum of carpets, & other essentials to a higher order of comfort than I have enjoyed in the ‘homestead region.’” He mentioned in the same letter that he would not be able to attend the Democratic state convention in Hastings in September. He told Morton, “You may if you have need, designate some one to whom I can send a proxy to committee meetings.” On October 6 following the convention, he sent Morton a twenty-five-dollar contribution “as my part of campaign fund. Put it where it will ‘do the most good.’ . . . I am sorry I can’t do more work, but the shadow of the wolf is on my threshold.”²⁴

In Lincoln Calhoun’s circumstances improved. Hired as foreman of the *Journal* newsroom in 1880, he soon showed so much talent for reporting and editorial writing that Horace W. Hebbard was appointed assistant foreman to help oversee the purely mechanical duties. By 1881 Calhoun was managing editor. About the time that the *Journal* relocated from Ninth and O streets to Ninth and P, he began writing “Topics of the Times,” a daily column of gossipy paragraphs gleaned from exchange newspapers, readers’ contributions, and his own fertile imagination. He continued until he left the paper in 1886, after which “Topics” was picked up by other *Journal* staffers (including Walt Mason) until A. L. Bixby continued the column under the name “Daily Drift.” Calhoun

Journalist James D. Calhoun

later claimed to be an “impartial friend and foster father” to both Bixby and Mason.²⁵

Calhoun’s increasing importance at the *Journal*—his rise from compositor to an editorial chair—seems to have occurred in response to the growth of the paper itself. He remarked in July of 1881 in his “Topics” column that the task of editing a paper the size of the *Journal* was more than one man could conveniently manage, and that in addition to the well-known editor in chief, Charles H. Gere, there were several subordinates. Significantly, Calhoun added, “Much of their work appears without having been scanned by the eye of the chief.”²⁶

The difference in political background between Gere, a Union veteran and strong Republican, and Calhoun, a Confederate veteran and Democrat, did not prevent them from working together. Although Calhoun lacked the scholarship and polished literary style of Gere, his long years in the print shop and at the editorial desk gave him a characteristic ease of expression.²⁷ Fellow Democrat A. J. Sawyer recalled in 1915 a political speech Calhoun gave in Waverly during his *Journal* years that illustrated his public and private politics. Calhoun opposed a protective tariff, but the *Journal* had recently editorialized in favor of it:

At the close of his address one of the audience rose and in a sharp, shrill voice inquired: “Are you the J. D. Calhoun who is a writer on *The Journal*? If so how can you reconcile your published statements with your speech tonight?” His reply was “In *The Journal* I present the republican position, in my talk tonight I have given you the democratic views. Take your choice.”²⁸

Hugh G. McVicker, a *Journal* colleague of Calhoun’s, remembered that Calhoun liked to declare himself lazy but performed a prodigious amount of work:

One o’clock in the afternoon often found him at his desk, grinding out from a half column to a column of ‘Topics of the Times,’ going through a small mountain of country exchanges and extracting it seemed by instinct such items as were worthy of reproduction and editing some

half dozen to a dozen letters from correspondents over the state before going home to dinner. Seven o’clock found him back at the desk, dressing up and writing the headlines for the telegraph report, watching for city items as they developed, reading proof and if necessary . . . setting a few stickfuls of type.²⁹



J. Sterling Morton, 1882. RG1013:2-17

With a more secure job and income than he had ever had, Calhoun’s natural talent for storytelling and spinning tall tales blossomed. The first of his fictional characters, Mr. and Mrs. Billhandle, appeared in “Topics” with an account of trapping rats in their sitting room. In August of 1881 he confided to *Journal* readers that he had learned in strict confidence that a “Nebraska genius” had invented a mechanical sea serpent for sale to seaside hotels to entertain tourists. Made of India rubber and propelled by two pairs of oars moved by clockwork, the serpent could be made any length from fifty to one hundred feet at the cost of ten dollars a running foot. The inventor would soon bring out an improved model that could cruise at

twenty miles an hour, raise its head, spout spray, turn its eyes in the sockets, open and shut its mouth, and dive.³⁰

It was not long before the author of “Topics” gained a reputation for stretching the truth. Calhoun reacted testily to a paragraph in the *Tecumseh Torchlight* addressed to “the liar of *The State Journal*,” and later explained to *Journal* readers his concept of the difference between “a vulgar and an artistic lie.” An artistic or good lie presents an impossibility so plausibly that people believe it. Such a lie exhibited “the touch of genius.”³¹

Perhaps the most memorable example of such a “touch of genius” among Calhoun’s newspaper tales is the account of “A Celestial Visitor,” which supposedly fell to earth about thirty-five miles northwest of Benkelman in June 1884. A June 8 article in the *Journal* with impressive headlines told of a “blazing aerolite” that crashed almost within view of a group of Dundey County cowboys, who found metal machinery scattered over the prairie in the wake of the mysterious object. Intense heat at the crash site prevented them from investigating much further. Calhoun’s “Topics of the Times” column took special note of the aerial visitor and vouched for the intelligence of the article writer, “who is a man that generally knows what he is talking about.” The June 10 *Journal* carried a followup report that the “magical meteor” had completely dissolved in a rainstorm. The article concluded, “There are a thousand theories afloat as to how it came and what it was, but they are all now unfortunately incapable of solution.”³²

The discerning might have noted that the June 10 report seemed suspiciously eager to discourage prospective visitors to the crash site by assuring them that all trace of the strange object had disappeared. The “Topics” column on June 11 dismissed the subject by speculation that the meteor had actually been an elusive Democratic presidential candidate.³³

Horace W. Hebbard, Calhoun’s former assistant, in 1927 recalled the incident and its unforeseen consequences:

The [meteor] story was written by J. D. Calhoun, managing editor, and among those who read it was Charles W. Fleming, an employee of the business office of the *Journal*. Mr. Fleming saw visions of a fortune if he could obtain this meteor or whatever it was and exhibit it for a fee to the curious throughout the country. Accordingly he took the train for Benkelman the morning the story appeared bent on obtaining possession of the wonder and bringing it home with him. He was disillusioned when he arrived at Benkelman and found no one who had heard anything about the thing.³⁴

The year 1884 was eventful for Calhoun personally as well as professionally. On February 9 his two-year-old son, Hiram J., died in Lincoln. On March 25 he announced to "Topics" readers that he was returning South for several months. During his absence he wrote a number of columns for the *Journal* describing the sights he encountered and the emergence of a new spirit in the South after the ravages of the Civil War. The trip seemed to soften some of Calhoun's lingering antagonism toward his Confederate Army days. "A wandering minstrel with a wheezy organ played 'Dixie' under our window yesterday," he wrote in "Topics" after he had returned home. "It was the first time we ever heard the old piece without getting sick."³⁵

Another death in the spring of 1884—that of the Rev. J. J. Fleharty in Tampa, Florida, on May 2—was to have long-lasting ramifications for Calhoun. Fleharty, a Methodist minister who had served as president of Nebraska Wesleyan University at Fullerton, was attended during his last days by a brother, Stephen F. Fleharty, former newspaperman and secretary to Nebraska Governor Albinus Nance. After J. J. Fleharty died, S. F. stayed on in Florida. Portions of his letters to Calhoun extolling the opportunities and healthful climate there began to appear intermittently in "Topics."³⁶

The year ended on a high note as Calhoun took another vacation—a hunting trip to western Nebraska and Wyoming, "the home of ozone and health." Again he wrote a number of columns for the *State Journal* while traveling, de-

scribing the western areas he visited. He returned, obviously refreshed, at the end of December after almost a month-long absence, promising "Topics" readers to "stay at home all next year and attend to business like a man instead of galavanting around the country like a schoolboy."³⁷



Albert Watkins, appointed Lincoln postmaster in 1885. RG2411-5901

The election of a Democrat, Grover Cleveland, to the presidency in 1884 raised the hopes of Democrats nationwide for federal office. The spring of 1885 saw the emergence of controversy in Lincoln over the appointment of a new postmaster, whose job was a political plum secured by services for the party in power. The Civil Service Act of 1883 had established a system of competitive examinations for appointment to federal positions, but it covered only about 10.5 percent of the federal executive civil service.

Among the first hints that Calhoun might be seeking the appointment was his denunciation May 8 in "Topics" of

several afternoon Lincoln newspapers that had criticized a "Journal hireling" for seeking the city post office. In August he noted that a rumor was going the rounds of the press that he was a candidate for the Lincoln postmastership. After emphatically denying that he was seeking the office, he stated he had not contradicted the rumor only because it was a source of personal amusement. However, after Albert Watkins received the appointment in October, Calhoun criticized the conservative Democrats—"old wheel horses" like J. Sterling Morton—who had backed Watkins.³⁸ Watkins served as postmaster for the next four years, a growing irritant to Calhoun who felt that his own services to the Democratic Party were being undervalued.

In the summer of 1886 Calhoun seized an opportunity for more independence. He had always wanted his own newspaper in a flourishing town—if not in Brownville or Bloomington, then in Lincoln. His opportunity came when President Grover Cleveland offered the American consulate in Barranquilla, Colombia, to Victor Vifquain of the *Daily State Democrat*, a four-page Lincoln paper with editorial offices near Tenth and O streets. Vifquain accepted. For several months after his departure for South America in June, the *State Democrat* was edited by Albert Watkins, who had been associated with the paper before he accepted the Lincoln postmastership. Calhoun and Watkins exchanged barbs on several occasions, with Watkins acknowledging on June 10 the dislike of the "Topics editor" for the manner in which the *State Democrat* was being edited, and calling Calhoun's criticism a compliment to himself.³⁹

On August 3, 1886, Calhoun's name appeared as editor and proprietor in the *Daily State Democrat*. He confided to readers, "Beginning with a very limited means, it is hoped allowances will be made for shortcomings as compared with old and well established papers." Calhoun managed to acquire the paper without financial backing, one of the

Journalist James D. Calhoun

few times in his career when this was true. His businesslike approach was revealed in an August 5, 1886, letter to J. Sterling Morton demanding that Morton start paying for his previously complimentary subscription.⁴⁰

On the *State Democrat* "Dots and Dashes" carried the same kind of material that had appeared in "Topics of the Times." Comic poetry, fictional characters, and humorous anecdotes were then common ingredients of an editorial column, and Calhoun usually managed it more than successfully. However, the stress of running a daily Lincoln newspaper with too little money and help sometimes made a light approach impossible. Explaining to readers why the customary "Dots and Dashes" column was omitted in the October 11, 1886, issue, Calhoun wrote testily, "The editor has a great deal to do. He can hardly find time to laugh and joke with the readers."⁴¹

By 1886 Calhoun had long abandoned his third-party days of the early 1870s and had returned to the Democrats, describing himself as "Jeffersonian, Jacksonian." He tried to avoid the divisive liquor question, opposed railroad monopoly, and generally had little sympathy for woman suffrage.⁴²

During the twenty-three months he owned the *State Democrat*, Calhoun became somewhat more candid about his Civil War record. In 1885 while still at the *State Journal* he had been attacked by the *Omaha Bee* as a "bloody belligerent bush whacker of the war period." (When pressed by Calhoun, the *Bee* relented and wrote that it had meant only that he was a "figurative, editorial bush whacker.") By March of 1887 he was confident enough to share with readers his reminiscences of the Battle of Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia, in which he had participated. In September he wrote about his plans to attend a reunion of Union and Confederate soldiers in the battle region. He criticized the political agenda of the GAR and the "old soldiers' racket" of seeking votes based on candidates' war records; and

asked *State Democrat* readers to pardon his hobby of correcting in the paper the errors in Civil War reminiscences appearing in the press.⁴³

S. F. Fleharty continued to charm Calhoun and his other Nebraska friends with stories of the beauty and bounty of Florida. Calhoun noted in May of 1888 that Fleharty, a Union veteran, was "very much in love with his Southern home and all he lacks of being perfectly happy is to have 501 of his Nebraska friends go down there and settle with him."⁴⁴ The allure of the southern climate and the frequency of its mention increased as the fortunes of the *State Democrat* declined.

By late 1887 Calhoun could foresee the end. He noted of the *Democrat* in December: "Bought by the present owner when its fortunes were at the lowest ebb, the paper has had and still has a difficult and perplexing struggle for support." He also noted glumly that the paper was running more plate material to fill unsold ad space. Recurring health problems prompted him to take a lone walking and camping trip in southeast Nebraska, during which his weight dropped to 136 pounds.⁴⁵

The last issue of Calhoun's *State Democrat*, that of Saturday, June 30, 1888, announced that because of the current owner's financial and physical inability to manage the paper, it had been sold to H. M. Bushnell, Sam D. Cox, and Al G. Fairbrother. Another story reported the farewell presentation of a gold-headed cane to Calhoun by the employees of the *Democrat*. The next issue of Monday, July 2, 1888, carried a new name, *Lincoln Daily Call*, and stressed the change in political affiliation from Democratic to Republican. The new owners of the *Call* conceded that Calhoun would be missed by some of his many Lincoln friends—but Calhoun was soon gone on another trip, this time a one-thousand-mile jaunt by stagecoach and train.⁴⁶

The itinerary and date of his return as well as his activities for the next eighteen months or so are unclear. Lincoln

city directories list him as a journalist residing in Lincoln but give no newspaper affiliation, and also indicate that he tried the real estate business as a part of the firm of Calhoun & Treeman. He contributed to the *Capital City Courier's* special Christmas issue in 1888 and almost certainly spent some time helping to manage a newspaper at Alliance in which he had invested while still conducting the *State Democrat*.⁴⁷

Calhoun's interest in Alliance was similar to his earlier interest in Bloomington and the Republican valley. In early 1888 Calhoun had announced that William S. Perrin, *State Democrat* city editor, would soon start a weekly paper at the booming new town of Alliance. Perrin would function as editor and manager with Calhoun "interested in the enterprise in a proprietary way." Lincoln newspaperman James A. Coryell moved to Alliance to take a position on the *Alliance Argus* and in January 1889 was in sole charge.⁴⁸ When the *Argus* failed to thrive with Alliance, Coryell headed back to Lincoln and joined Calhoun in the publication of the *Lincoln Weekly Herald*.

Calhoun returned to Lincoln from an excursion to Mexico on January 6, 1890. He emerged from eighteen months of relative obscurity with a January 15 communication to the Nebraska press defending the railroads' rights to make a reasonable profit and predicting that Charles H. Van Wyck would run for governor on the Independent ticket in the fall. He also gave a "witty, brilliant, and educational address" to the Nebraska Press Association's January meeting at Kearney. He had been moderately active in the NPA at least since 1875 (when he had accompanied a press excursion from Lincoln to Brownville) and in 1886 was elected to a term as first vice-president.⁴⁹ His last newspaper venture in Nebraska was the publication of the *Lincoln Weekly Herald* and the boosting of William Jennings Bryan within its pages.

Calhoun had announced in his January press release that two new Democratic weeklies would begin publication

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in Lincoln about March 1, one with which he would be associated, and the other to be edited by Albert Watkins. He surmised that Watkins might beat him into the field.⁵⁰

The failures of his *State Democrat* and of the *Alliance Argus* had both sharpened and embittered Calhoun, and the change in tone was immediately noticeable in the *Herald*. In his new editorial column entitled “Nothing But Lies,” Calhoun (only partly in jest) referred to himself as “the head liar of the establishment.” He stated that truth was relative, changing from day to day, and related anecdotes regarding lies and how they might be made more believable. J. Burrows, editor of *The Farmers’ Alliance*, soon attacked him in print as “combining . . . the unhappy qualities of heartlessness, cheekiness, cynicism, misanthropy, and distrust of human nature.” Calhoun responded by accusing

Burrows of deliberately misleading farmers for personal gain, and later that year called the Farmers Alliance a “gang of political crowbait.”⁵¹

Calhoun and Coryell published a Democratic weekly that carried on editor Calhoun’s traditional opposition to the protective tariff and railroad monopoly, and his traditional ambivalence on the liquor question.⁵² The partnership lasted only about six months. The last issue to carry both names was that of August 2, 1890. A week later, on August 9, the *Herald* carried a front-page illustration of William Jennings Bryan, the new Democratic nominee for Congress from the First District. It was accompanied by laudatory quotes from the state Democratic press under the heading “Our Standard Bearer.” Calhoun’s devotion to this new champion would play an important role in the last twenty-five years of his life.

At the beginning of 1891 Calhoun found a new partner, Lorenzo D. Woodruff, a Lincoln printer and publisher. Calhoun and Woodruff put out the *Lincoln Weekly Herald* from 1020 P Street and continued its Democratic policies under Calhoun’s editorial direction.⁵³

A recurring theme of the *Weekly Herald* was the steady ascendance of William Jennings Bryan. In April 1891 Calhoun observed that young congressman Bryan was a man to be proud of and added, “Not five percent of the rank and file of the party in this state agrees with Mr. Morton.” Victor Vifquain reappeared in the columns of the *Weekly Herald* as the author of several articles (favoring bimetallism) on the silver question. Vifquain also managed editorial duties on the paper while Calhoun took another vacation trip in September 1891 to northwest Nebraska, southwest Dakota, and eastern Wyoming.⁵⁴



P Street west from Eleventh Street, Lincoln. *Lincoln Weekly Herald* offices for Calhoun and Lorenzo D. Woodruff were near here. From *Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Lincoln*, published in 1893. RG2158-658

Journalist James D. Calhoun

Calhoun made no secret of the fact that his increasingly frequent travels, some subsidized by the Burlington Railroad, were due to health problems and the effects of overwork. Nebraska's climate continued to discourage him. Meanwhile letters from S. F. Fleharty were quoted in the *Weekly Herald* with their usual descriptions of warm, inviting Florida. In the spring of 1892 Fleharty hosted a party of visiting Nebraskans including Charles H. Morrill, said to have gained thirty-nine pounds in seventeen days of Florida vacationing. In June Calhoun noted that Fleharty had laid out

a beautiful addition to Tampa, which he has christened Lincoln Villa, and proposes to allow his old neighbors and friends in this city to have delightful sites for winter homes—or chances for a smooth little speculation—at figures that no sensible and well posted man can resist.⁵⁵

During his four years with the *Weekly Herald*, Calhoun continued to write more openly of his Civil War experiences. Although he still tried not to affront “people whose sensibilities are likely to be offended by the spectacle of ex-rebels on exhibition,” he serialized in the paper his own short novel entitled *Tom Gollahorn. A Story of the South During the War*. The first installment appeared on March 14, 1891, and introduced the main character, eighteen-year-old Tom Gollahorn, of Telfair County, Georgia. Anxious to receive a promised reward of eighty acres of land from the local commander of a unit being raised for service in the Confederate Army, Tom enlists shortly after the Battle of Bull Run. Instead of an expected speedy victory for the South, Tom experiences a long, drawn-out war in which the fortunes of both his home state and his family disintegrate. He finally deserts, returns briefly to his Georgia home to settle accounts with his former wife and her new partner, and then leaves for Texas. The whole is a dismal tale of disintegration, both of the South and of Tom, which may offer insights on why Calhoun came north after the Civil War.⁵⁶

Calhoun's writings during the *Herald* years reveal that he was considering not only relocation but a possible change of occupation. Albert Watkins had served as Lincoln postmaster until C. H. Gere, Calhoun's former boss on the *Journal*, received the office December 20, 1889, as a Republican appointee of the Benjamin Harrison administration. When Grover Cleveland was elected for a second term as U.S. President in 1892, the advent of a Democratic administration again gave Calhoun an opportunity to pursue the Lincoln postmastership. Indications of his intentions appeared in the *Weekly Herald* in the spring of 1893 in the form of reprints from area newspapers. For example, the *Blue Hill Leader* noted that Calhoun appeared to have the “inside track in the race for the Lincoln postoffice. . . . We know of no more deserving democrat than the old colonel in the state.”⁵⁷

But Calhoun, a man with many friends, had also gained enemies, not only among Republicans but among fellow Democrats who did not share his enthusiasm for Bryan. Some thought his former Independent ideas were reappearing. Lincoln newspaperman W. Morton Smith later wrote that if Calhoun's opinions had not been so populist, his writings would have had more weight among thinking people.⁵⁸

Calhoun, however, was publicly urging Independents to become Democrats. On December 3, 1892, Calhoun published in the *Weekly Herald* a letter from Addison E. Sheldon of the *Chadron Advocate*, which stated that Independents would never join the Democratic Party, as Calhoun was urging, but concluded on a conciliatory note:

Those of us who have brains as well as politics can help a man like W. J. Bryan when he is fighting a hard battle. . . . Let us take courage and postoffices and country printing, . . . and use them to enlarge the boundaries of common sense and extend the dominion of reason and the People themselves shall of a common impulse go after what they want and get it.⁵⁹

Calhoun strongly supported Bryan's views on the money question.

The prospective success of the free silver resolution at Nebraska's Democratic State Convention, held April 13–14, 1892, in Omaha, prompted a jubilant reaction from Calhoun: “[He] doffed his beaver and, with a succession of joyful howls and shrieks that would have transfixed a Navajo Indian, sent it soaring toward the roof, borne aloft by his benevolent spirits.”⁶⁰

Calhoun's anger at J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, who both supported Cleveland's conservative money policies, surfaced in a letter he wrote in February of 1893 to Morton in response to Watkins's recently published letter to Cleveland boosting Morton for Secretary of Agriculture. The Watkins letter also criticized Bryan, without naming him, as one of a group of men who had sought to inoculate the Democratic Party “with unsafe and unsound vagaries and principles.”⁶¹ Watkins, who in the Morton-Watkins history of Nebraska proudly recalled his fight against Bryan and free silver, later in 1893 referred to “Calhoun's Herald” as “Mr. Bryan's personal organ, . . . [which] demands a declaration for 16 to 1 free coinage and says that anything short of an endorsement of Bryan in this way would be repudiating Bryan.”⁶²

Congressman Bryan tried to secure the Lincoln postmastership for Calhoun, but was told that Calhoun was not acceptable to Cleveland. Secretary of Agriculture Morton opposed the Calhoun appointment and tried to persuade the president to his point of view. Nebraska Governor James E. Boyd supported the Calhoun nomination as a check to Morton, his rival within the Nebraska Democratic Party; other Democrats opposed it in order to oppose Bryan. As early as January 2, 1894, Lincoln druggist J. H. Harley, an administration Democrat who was also a friend of Bryan, was suggested as a compromise candidate. Although others besides Calhoun sought the office, it was Harley, who had not sought it, who ultimately received the prize.⁶³

Harley's appointment surprised most

Nebraskans and dismayed some. Although the *Omaha World-Herald* interpreted it as a victory for Bryan, who had secured his second choice for postmaster, others felt that Cleveland had prevailed in forcing Bryan to drop his first choice, Calhoun. *The Nebraska State Journal*, after acknowledging that Harley had once been a Republican, believed that both factions of the Democratic Party could claim a victory in this final disposition of “the fattest federal office in Lancaster County.” W. Morton Smith observed in the *Saturday Morning Courier*:

Mr. Harley’s appointment is called a compromise appointment. Like many so called compromises it is more of an irritant than an allayer of feeling and soreness. Mr. Bryan has repeatedly asserted that he would stand by Major Calhoun until the very end, that he would, as the expression goes, ‘die with him.’ And Major Calhoun and his friends expected him to keep his word. Mr. Bryan did not do as he promised. When he was informed that Calhoun could not be appointed he . . . bobs up serenely [sic] with a new candidate [Harley] to recommend.⁶⁴

The long drawn-out struggle had attracted attention and newspaper comment from around the state. Mentor Brown, the Republican editor of the *Kearney Hub*, sided with Calhoun and criticized “a man as big as the president of the United States [when he] refuses to make an appointment recommended by the home congressman and that people of all parties heartily endorse.” Calhoun’s old Nemaha County friend, J. H. Dundas, said: “J. D. Calhoun wanted the Lincoln postoffice, but would not pay the price Cleveland had put on it.” The Nebraska Press Association voted on January 31, 1894, to telegraph the president in support of Calhoun. After Harley was appointed instead, the *Lincoln Call*, an independent Republican newspaper, villified Cleveland as a “three hundred pound Chester White hog in the presidential chair.”⁶⁵

The Nebraska State Journal recalled a Bryan speech made during the summer of 1893 in which Bryan promised to “expire in the last ditch rather than surrender a single conviction, but when the



“W. J. Bryan, Democratic Nominee for Congress in the First District.” Reproduced in the *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, August 9, 1890. RG3198:15-10

Journalist James D. Calhoun

ditch came along he dropped Calhoun into it and left him there to die alone." References to dying (or failing to die) in a ditch reappeared in *Journal* editorial columns almost daily during the aftermath of what William E. Annin, then the *Journal's* Washington correspondent, called the "heartache at Lincoln."⁶⁶

The resulting humiliation as well as his deteriorating health seriously affected Calhoun, who had been so confident of receiving the postmastership that he had rejected in advance a suggestion that he be appointed to the Lincoln land office if the preferred appointment did not materialize. A blizzard that struck Lincoln shortly after Harley's good fortune could not have lightened Calhoun's mood. He conceded that he was disappointed in Bryan, but ignored suggestions of several anti-administration Democratic newspapers in Nebraska that he run for Bryan's congressional seat if Bryan should choose to run for the U.S. Senate.⁶⁷

Despite the confidence expressed by Smith and others that he would weather this disappointment as he had weathered so many before, Calhoun quietly began planning to leave Nebraska, his home since the late 1860s. The *Weekly Herald* of March 10, 1894, noted briefly that he had gone to Tampa to visit S. F. Fleharty, rest, and fish. In a letter to *Herald* readers, published the next week on March 17, Calhoun described his journey to Florida, seen as a lush green paradise, a wonderful contrast to the winter weather he had left behind in Lincoln. "Tampa," he wrote on March 24 "is a beautiful place and full of energy and bustle—a northern town set down on the sub-tropical shore of the Gulf of Mexico."⁶⁸

The March 24 issue was the last to carry the names of Calhoun and Woodruff as publishers, to be replaced on March 31 by those of Woodruff and Ott. The last "Nothing But Lies" column noted briefly that there would be no further Calhoun letters from Florida to *Weekly Herald* readers. Elsewhere in the March 24 issue Calhoun claimed he was

leaving Nebraska for a trial period of a year, not because he was "soured" or disappointed, but only because he had been offered a job in Florida. Few believed it. Smith wrote bitterly that Calhoun had been "driven away from Lincoln" and lamented that a man who had come to Nebraska at such an early date should be "compelled to pull up the stakes that have well nigh crumbled in their sockets and pitch his tent in another country."⁶⁹

Shortly before Calhoun's departure from Lincoln to Tampa, his newspaper friends held a farewell gathering for him and presented him with a gold-headed cane. A. L. Bixby of the *Journal* wrote a part of the presentation address in his characteristic comic verse. Although Calhoun had become increasingly bitter and somewhat eccentric during his last years in Lincoln (he once refused to cover proceedings of the Nebraska Legislature in the *Weekly Herald*, calling them "dreary slush"), his long career and wide acquaintanceship made him at the time of his departure one of the best known figures in Lincoln.⁷⁰

Although Calhoun lived in Tampa for the rest of his life, he did not forget the state where he had spent so many productive years. He was in Nebraska again in September of 1895 gathering material for a series of syndicated letters for eastern newspapers, and on a later return visit to Lincoln was given an informal reception. He kept in close touch with his Nebraska friends and was prominently represented in the *Journal's* homecoming feature of December 31, 1911, which included letters from former Lincolnites. He said modestly then that he had done little of note in the seventeen years since he had left Lincoln, but conceded that he had worked reasonably hard in his professional line.⁷¹

In fact, he served as managing editor and editorial writer for the *Tampa Times* and founded the *Tampa Herald*; later he served as secretary of the Tampa Board of Trade. In 1913 he was appointed deputy collector of customs in charge of the Tampa office of the U.S. Customs

Service. William Jennings Bryan, then U.S. Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson, was thought to have been responsible for this political appointment. At the time of his death on July 9, 1915, he was supervisor of bonded warehouses in Tampa for the Customs Service. The income from these positions, as well as profits from judicious real estate investments, made Calhoun's Florida years more comfortable than many of his Nebraska years had been.⁷²

The Nebraska press noted his death, especially the *State Journal*, which ran a lengthy death notice on July 13, 1915, and a more extensive tribute on July 18. The latter consisted of recollections of Calhoun by a number of Nebraskans who had known him in Brownville, Franklin and Gage counties, and in Lincoln.⁷³

Although he had enemies, his congeniality enabled him to get along with a wide variety of people. Lincoln newspaperman Harry T. Dobbins recalled in 1915, "He knew everybody in Lincoln and everybody seemed to like him. He was by far the most picturesque figure in the newspaper world of that day." With his large figure, slouch hat, and small gray imperial, he was a familiar figure in downtown Lincoln.⁷⁴

As an artful storyteller, Calhoun could delight his friends and readers with wonderful anecdotes that sometimes blurred reality and fiction. "The major's imagination is a looloo," wrote W. Morton Smith in 1894. "And there is something funny about his imagination. When he imagines anything he is convinced that is so." Calhoun's Benkelman meteor tale resurfaces periodically and has most recently found its way into print in a Nebraska travel guide.⁷⁵ However, his wonderful stories and contributions to the history of Lincoln and the state remain largely in the back files of Nebraska newspapers.

Notes

¹ *Nebraska Advertiser* (Brownville), June 6, 1867, quoted in Marion Marsh Brown, "The Brownville Story: Portrait of a Phoenix, 1854-1974," *Nebraska*

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History, 55 (Spring 1974): 77; Robert W. Furnas, "Nebraska Press Recollections," *The Daily State Journal* (Lincoln), Apr. 23, 24, 1874 (typed copy in Henry Allen Brainerd Collection, MS455, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln); Andrew S. Holladay, "History of Nemaha County," *Nemaha County Granger* (Brownville), July 14, 21, 1876; Bill M. Woods, "The History and Influence of the Press of Nemaha County, Nebraska" (Peru State Teachers College, 1944), 21.

² George L. Miller, "Newspapers and Newspaper Men of the Territorial Period," *Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln, 1902), 5: 46–47.

³ "J. D. [James Duncan] Calhoun, Esteemed Citizen, Dies Suddenly, Was Intimate Friend of W. J. Bryan," *Tampa [Florida] Morning Tribune*, July 10, 1915; *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Feb. 18, 1893. See notes 15 and 73 for name information.

⁴ Reprinted from the *Omaha Herald* by the *Nebraska Herald* (Plattsmouth), July 15, 1869, and by the *Nebraska City News*, July 9, 1869. A. T. Andreas, comp., *History of the State of Nebraska* (1882; reprint, Evansville, Ind.: Unigraphic Inc., 1975), 1142.

⁵ *Nebraska Advertiser*, Oct. 18, 1870; Woods, "Press of Nemaha County," 21; *Brownville Daily Democrat*, July 24, 1870. *The Daily Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln) marked the weekly becoming a daily. On July 22, 1870, it was named the *Daily State Journal*. For a list of subsequent name changes see Betty Stevens, *-30- A History of the Lincoln Journal* (Henderson, Nebr.: Service Press, 1999), 18–19.

⁶ *Nebraska Herald*, Sept. 8, 1870; J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913), 3C:55; Addison E. Sheldon, *Nebraska, the Land and the People* (Chicago/New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1931), 1:418; *Nebraska Advertiser*, Sept. 8, 1870. Calhoun did not mention his own name in connection with the People's Convention but the *Nebraska Herald*, Sept. 8, 1870, reported, "Calhoun of the Brownville Democrat . . . is the principal character in the 'peoples' move.'"

⁷ Sheldon, *Land and People*, 1:418; *Nebraska Advertiser*, Oct. 18, 1870; *Brownville Daily Democrat*, Oct. 14, 1870; J. D. Calhoun to J. Sterling Morton, Nov. 28, 1870, J. Sterling Morton Papers, MS7, NSHS.

⁸ Reprinted from *Tecumseh Chieftain* by *Daily State Journal*, Apr. 27, 1871; *The Daily State Journal*, June 2, 1875.

⁹ *Nebraska Advertiser*, July 15, 1869; *Nebraska Herald*, Aug. 24, 1871.

¹⁰ Albert Watkins, "Organization of the Counties of Kearney, Franklin, Harlan, and Phelps," *Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln: 1913), 17: 228-31; Andreas, *History*, 870; Barbara Bonham, ed., *Historical Highlights of Franklin*

County (Campbell, Nebr.: C & L Publishing, 1967), 22.

¹¹ *Beatrice Express*, Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 28, 1872; *Bloomington Advocate*, July 16, 1915; *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 21, 1891.

¹² "Topics of the Times," *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Sept. 4, 1884; Furnas, "Nebraska Press Recollections"; R. S. Proudfit, "The Bloomington Guard," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915; *Naponee Herald*, July 15, 1915.

¹³ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 17, 1884. "Adventures of a Chump, A Brief and Busy Career as a Real Estate Agent," *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 15, 1890. Calhoun wrote several "Adventures of a Chump" articles describing the chump's misfortunes in mining, printing, soldiering, and romance, and signing most of them with the name "Peter Doubt Young," one of his fictional characters.

¹⁴ *Beatrice Express*, Apr. 10, 1873; Furnas, "Nebraska Press Recollections."

¹⁵ "The Peoples' Independent Convention," *The Daily State Journal*, Sept. 9, 1874; *Beatrice Express*, Sept. 17, 1874; *Nemaha County Granger*, Sept. 25, 1874. The Morton-Watkins *History* refers to Calhoun as "J. D." prior to 1874 (3C:55, 101) and as "John" in connection with the 1874 convention (3C:139, 140). Sheldon in his 1931 history of Nebraska also referred to Calhoun as "John" (1:481, 484). However, Calhoun himself noted in the *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Feb. 18, 1893, "This editor's name is not John. It is Jim."

¹⁶ *The Daily State Journal*, Sept. 10, 1874, quoted in Wayne A. Alvord, "The Nebraska State Journal, 1867–1904" (master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1934), 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, June 3, 1875; *Auburn Post*, Aug. 14, 1903; F. E. Johnson, "Many Friends, No Enemies," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915.

¹⁸ Morton-Watkins, *History*, 2:357; *Beatrice Express*, June 10, July 1, 1875. Calhoun is also mentioned by *The Daily State Journal*, Feb. 27, 1875, as an employee of the *Boomerang*.

¹⁹ "The Typesetting Race," *The Daily State Journal*, Feb. 16, 1875, quoted in Henry Allen Brainerd, *History of the Nebraska Press Association* (Lincoln: July 1, 1923), 2:44-46. Calhoun's recollection of this incident appears in the *Daily State Democrat*, Jan. 31, 1888.

²⁰ Morton-Watkins, *History*, 2:357. *The Daily State Journal*, June 1, 1875, refers to Calhoun's affiliation with "the evening twinkler," in what is probably a joking reference to the name changes.

²¹ *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Nov. 18, 1893; *Beatrice Daily Express*, July 13, 1915; *Beatrice Express*, Dec. 4, 1876; Dec. 11, 21, 1876; John H. Zorn, comp., *City Directory of Lincoln, Nebraska for 1876–77* (Omaha: R. L. Polk & Co., 1876), 50.

²² *Bloomington Advocate*, Sept. 3, 1931; Frank L. Williams, "Calhoun in Franklin County," *The Sun-*

day State Journal, July 18, 1915; Proudfit, "Bloomington Guard."

²³ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 15, 16, Apr. 7, 1882; Horace W. Hebbard, "Horace W. Hebbard Recalls Journal in Its Twelfth Year," *Sunday State Journal*, July 24, 1927.

²⁴ Calhoun to Morton, Aug. 20, Oct. 6, 1880, Morton Papers.

²⁵ Alvord, "Nebraska State Journal," 15; Horace W. Hebbard, "A Tribute From a Co-Worker," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915; "J. D. Calhoun," *The Nebraska State Journal*, July 13, 1915; Hebbard, "Hebbard Recalls." Several months before he left Lincoln in 1894, Calhoun noted "as an impartial friend and foster father to both the boys" that Walt Mason had begun to write for the *Lincoln Call* and predicted that Mason's columns would be as popular as Bixby's. *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Jan. 13, 1894.

²⁶ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, July 27, 1881.

²⁷ Harry T. Dobbins, "Lives in Kindly Recollection," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, A. J. Sawyer, "A. J. Sawyer's Tribute."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Hugh G. McVicker, "A Nemaha County Pupil."

³⁰ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Aug. 20, Aug. 27, 1881.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 28, 1883; Dec. 10, 1884.

³² *Ibid.*, "A Celestial Visitor, A Startling and Curious Story from the Ranges of Dundy County. A Blazing Aerolite Falls to the Astounded Earth. It is Evidently a Machine of Human Manufacture. All Particulars that Are Yet Learned," June 8, 1884; "The Magical Meteor. It Dissolves Like a Drop of Dew Before the Morning Sun. The Most Mysterious Element of the Strange Phenomenon," June 10, 1884.

³³ *Ibid.*, June 11, 1884.

³⁴ Hebbard, "Hebbard Recalls."

³⁵ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 10, 12, Mar. 25, July 12, 1884. Calhoun later had two more children, Janet and George, who survived him.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, May 14, 1884. Andreas, *History*, 1065, 1123, 1124.

³⁷ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 6, 31, 1884.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, May 8, Aug. 23, Oct. 20, 1885; James C. Olson, *J. Sterling Morton* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 321.

³⁹ McVicker, "Nemaha County Pupil"; *Daily State Democrat* (Lincoln), June 10, 1886; Dec. 16, 1887.

⁴⁰ *Daily State Democrat*, Aug. 2, 1886; Calhoun to Morton, Aug. 5, 1886, Morton Papers.

⁴¹ *Daily State Democrat*, Oct. 11, 1886.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Jan. 6, 29, Nov. 26, Dec. 16, 1887.

⁴³ *The Daily Nebraska State Journal*, June 16, 17,

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1885; *Daily State Democrat*, Sept. 11, 1886; Mar. 14, Sept. 20, Oct. 7, 1887; *Weekly State Democrat*, Sept. 17, 1887.

⁴¹ *Daily State Democrat*, May 31, 1888.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Apr. 15, May 6, Dec. 16, 1887.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, June 29, 30, 1888; *Lincoln Daily Call*, July 2, 1888. The *Omaha Daily Herald*, June 16, 1888, reported the selling price as \$13,000 and remarked that the new *Call* would be "materially improved except in politics."

⁴⁷ *Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 22, 1888; *Cherrier's Lincoln City Directory 1890* (Lincoln: The Cherrier Directory and Publishing Company), 154.

⁴⁸ *Daily State Democrat*, Feb. 4, 1888; *Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Jan. 5, 1889.

⁴⁹ *Syracuse Journal*, Jan. 17, 1890, quoted in Marie U. Harmer and James L. Sellers, "Charles H. Van Wyck—Soldier and Statesman," *Nebraska History* 12: 348-49; *The Daily State Journal*, Feb. 27, 1875; NPA Notes, Brainerd Collection; Henry Allen Brainerd, *History of the Nebraska Press Association* (Lincoln, 1923), 1:12.

⁵⁰ *Syracuse Journal*, Jan. 17, 1890. On March 22 Calhoun noted "the advent of Mr. Albert Watkins to the editorial control of the [*Nebraska*] *State Democrat*." *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 22, 1890. Watkins eventually joined the staff of the *Nebraska State Historical Society*, where he served as historian from 1909 until his death in 1923. He was also the editor and chief force behind the publication of the Morton-Watkins history of Nebraska.

⁵¹ J. Burrows, "Something Specially for Calhoun," *The Farmers' Alliance* (Lincoln), Apr. 5, 1890; *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 15, Apr. 12, Dec. 13, 1890; Feb. 18, 1893.

⁵² *The Farmers' Alliance*, Mar. 15, 1890.

⁵³ *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Jan. 3, Jan. 24, 1891.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Mar. 7, Apr. 25, May 16, Sept. 25, Oct. 10, 1891.

⁵⁵ C. J. Bowlby, "A Real Friend," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 28, 1915; *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Apr. 16, June 11, 1892.

⁵⁶ *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 14 through June 13, 1891.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, May 6, 1893.

⁵⁸ *Saturday Morning Courier* (Lincoln), Mar. 31, 1894.

⁵⁹ "What an Independent Says," *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Dec. 3, 1892.

⁶⁰ "The Breach Widened," *Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Apr. 16, 1892. A vote recount indicated that the silver resolution had been defeated. The *Journal* noted that "as the chair announced an entirely different result Cal's spirits fell and the fur capote came sailing down with them."

⁶¹ Albert Watkins to Grover Cleveland, Jan. 14, 1893, and Calhoun to Morton, Feb. 20, 1893, Morton Papers. A copy of the Watkins letter was published in the *Semi-Weekly State Journal*, Feb. 21, 1893.

⁶² "Peace or War," *Morning World-Herald*, Oct. 4, 1893. A copy of the first part of the article, consisting of Watkins's Oct. 2 letter to the editor of the *World-Herald*, appears in the William Jennings Bryan Collection, MS464, NSHS.

⁶³ "J. D. Calhoun," *The Nebraska State Journal*, *Saturday Morning Courier*, Feb. 17, 1894; William E. Annin, "The New Nasby, J. H. Harley the Lucky Man and Billy Bryan Named Him," *The Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 9, 1894. The last article is a good summary of the 1893-94 Lincoln post office controversy.

⁶⁴ "Harley to be Postmaster," *Morning World-Herald*, Feb. 9, 1894. "Postmaster Harley," *The Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 9, 1894. *Saturday Morning Courier*, Feb. 17, 1894.

⁶⁵ *Kearney Daily Hub*, Feb. 13, 1894; *Granger* (Auburn), Feb. 23, 1894; *Lincoln Weekly News*, Feb. 1, 1894; *Lincoln Call*, Feb. 9, 1894.

⁶⁶ *The Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 9, 14, 1894.

⁶⁷ *Lincoln Call*, Dec. 22, 1893; *The Nebraska State Journal*, Mar. 12, 1894. "It was not a cold day when Cal got left, but a sympathetic blizzard put in an appearance a day later," according to Walt Mason, "Mason's Mosaics," *Lincoln Call*, Feb. 10, 1894. A. L. Bixby of *The Nebraska State Journal*, Feb. 10, 1894, also mentioned that Harley's appointment "and the refreshing snow storm that followed were both a surprise to the people."

⁶⁸ *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 10, 24, 1894; Annin, "New Nasby."

⁶⁹ *Lincoln Weekly Herald*, Mar. 24, 1894; *Courier*, Mar. 31, 1894.

⁷⁰ A. L. Bixby, "A Former Farewell," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915. The seven stanzas, first written to commemorate Calhoun's departure from Lincoln in 1894, were repeated in the tribute to him that appeared in the *Journal* after his death.

⁷¹ *Webster County Argus* (Red Cloud), Sept. 19, 1895. *The Sunday State Journal*, Dec. 31, 1911; C. V. Cole, "A Wonderful Printer," July 18, 1915.

⁷² "J. D. Calhoun," *The Nebraska State Journal*; "J. D. Calhoun, Esteemed Citizen," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, July 11, 1915; "Nebraska Newspaper Men Fondly Recall the Memory of J. D. Calhoun," *The Sunday State Journal*, July 18, 1915; *Nemaha County Herald* (Auburn), July 16, 1915. J. D. Calhoun to Mrs. C. H. Gere, Oct. 4, 1904, Gere Family Papers, MS302, NSHS. Calhoun's letter of condolence to Mrs. Gere after her husband's death is written on letterhead of the Tampa Board of Trade, with Calhoun listed as secretary.

⁷³ *The Sunday State Journal* tribute of July 18, 1915, includes references to "John D. Calhoun," while the earlier July 13 article uses Calhoun's preferred "J. D." throughout. The same photo is used with both. See note 15 for information on "John" Calhoun in the Morton-Watkins and Sheldon histories of Nebraska. One reason for the confusion may have been that Calhoun was often known to his friends not by his first name, but by an abbreviation of his last name: "In Brownville he was familiarly known as 'Cal,' and the name clung to him even in his later days. Many of us never called him by any other name." Johnson, "Many Friends."

⁷⁴ Dobbins, "Kindly Recollection." "J. D. Calhoun," *The Nebraska State Journal*.

⁷⁵ "Calhoun Himself Again," *Saturday Morning Courier*, Feb. 24, 1894. Alan Boye, *The Complete Roadside Guide to Nebraska* (St. Johnsbury, Vt.: Saitillo Press, 1993), 285-86.