



Nebraska History posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: General John J Pershing's Bid for the Presidency in 1920—"The Boys Will Never Call Him 'Papa' "

Full Citation: Lawrence L Murray, "General John J Pershing's Bid for the Presidency in 1920—The Boys Will Never Call Him 'Papa', " *Nebraska History* 53 (1972): 217-252.

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1972PershingPres.pdf>

Date: 8/14/2013

Article Summary: A well-known general like John J Pershing could have won the Republican nomination and the Presidency in 1920, according to the author, who thoroughly analyzes Pershing's poorly organized campaign. General Pershing exercised caution and restraint, rejecting grand strategy which inevitably hurt his campaign.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Albert Somit, Leonard Wood, Charles Gates Dawes, Pancho Villa, Charles Dick, Charles Evans Hughes, Heywood Broun, James Brackin, Frank H Hitchcock, George S Patton Jr, Guy Campbell, Newton D Baker, Thomas Schall, Isaac Sherwood, Will Hays, Francis Warren, Mark Woods, Frank Woods, George Woods, E J Silas, George Norris, P A Barrows, R O Howell, Frank Eager, Harvey Rathbone, E F Pettis, Frank Corrick, Frank Lowden, Malcolm Jennings, Guy C Chambers, C E Adams, John J Baldwin, O G Smith, Howard Sutherland, James Dawes, Percy Spencer, Frank W Mondell, Bascom Timmons, V H Stone, Hiram Johnson, Frank Harrison, George Norris, Frank D Eager, Edward F Goltra, John H McCooey, Alfred E Smith, Louis Civillier, Henry Wales

Keywords: National Victory Parade; *Worlds Work*; American Expeditionary Force; Pershing Republican League; Commercial Club of LaClede; Nebraska University Alumni Pershing for President Association; Soldiers and Sailors for Pershing Club; National Farmers' Congress; Nebraska Press Association [N.P.A.]; *Free Press*; *Literary Digest*

Photographs / Images: Major General Leonard Wood, Brigadier General P L Hall, Major E M DeWeese, Captain E M Harris, Captain C J Frankforter, Captain J G Faes, and the son of General Wood; portrait, John J Pershing in uniform; Pershing in Chicago in 1919 with William Hale Thompson, mayor and Illinois Republican leader; Charles G Dawes, later vice-president under Calvin Coolidge; portrait of Colonel Frank D Eager



Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood (left) was an avowed GOP candidate for the Presidency in 1920. Pictured with Wood during a stop in Lincoln (c. 1920) are (from left) Brig. Gen. P. L. Hall, Nebraska Adjutant General; Maj. E. M. DeWeese; Capt. E. M. Harris; Capt. C. J. Frankforter; Capt. J. G. Faes; and the son of General Wood, his aide.

GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING'S BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1920— "The Boys Will Never Call Him 'Papa' "

By LAWRENCE L. MURRAY

For a nation that takes pride in a tradition of anti-militarism and is constitutionally insistent upon civilian supremacy over the military, American voters have had a decided penchant for public officials who can lay claim to honorable if not heroic service under arms. In a sense elective office has almost become a reward for valor. Though this preference is evident at all levels, nowhere is it more striking than in the presidency. Of our thirty-six chief executives, eleven owed their nomination in considerable measure to their military fame, and another seven faced electorates fully informed of their military record.¹

In only one period in American history, the inter-war years from 1920 to 1940, has a military background appeared to be something less than a requisite to be considered presidential timber. World War I "failed to produce a presidential nominee, let alone a president," Albert Somit has written, not because "the voter had abandoned his demonstrated preference for the military hero; it was that the nature of our participation in the war operated to deny our general the chance to gain the fame necessary for political preferment." Because the war was half over when America entered and because American generals had to share command with their European counterparts, none was able to achieve the measure of fame that had catapulted the likes of Andrew Jackson and Ulysses S. Grant into the White House.²

There are more cogent reasons for this absence. World War I did not produce a military hero President, but it did launch at least one aspirant, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, who challenged a second soldier-candidate from an earlier war, Major General Leonard Wood, for the Republican nomination in 1920. A civilian-soldier, retired Brigadier General Charles Gates Dawes, was also thought by some to be a darkhorse threat at the GOP convention in Chicago, though he did not offer himself in the primaries as the other two did and he expressed no interest in being a candidate.³ The two career officers, Pershing and Wood, were not denied the presidency because of a sharing of command or a shortness of wartime activity, but because of a more complex set of factors that led the public and its political leaders to reject them.

General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, the supreme commander of the American Expeditionary Force, emerged from World War I as the best known and most widely acclaimed figure in the military hierarchy. From his legendary greeting, "Lafayette, we are here," through his dogged insistence that American forces fight as a unit and not be integrated with Allied troops, the general persistently appealed to chauvinistic sentiments at home. Not as well known or as popular as General Wood on the eve of involvement, he did have a budding national reputation. His exploits in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, his subsequent vault from captain to brigadier general in 1906, and his chase of Pancho Villa in 1916 had brought him into the public eye. His assignment as commander of the AEF and Wood's "exile" to train conscripts assured the one-time Missouri farm boy that he would be the center of attention.⁴

The war was over less than a month when attention focused on the AEF leader as a presidential possibility. The pessimism engendered by the fight over the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations had yet to surface, and the nineteenth century tradition of turning to military candidates was still strong. Former Senator Charles Dick of Ohio announced that he and some friends in Akron planned to incorporate "The Pershing Republican League" to "crystallize the already existing sentiment for General Pershing as President of the United States in 1920, and to work for his nomination and election." Dick

believed that if sentiment "is sufficient to nominate him, I am certain that he will consider it, like Judge [Charles Evans] Hughes, his duty to accept the nomination."⁵ No more was heard of "The Pershing Republican League," but the mention of its intent was sufficient to touch the spark of speculation that Pershing would be a candidate.

From war's end to September, 1919, Pershing was absorbed with dismantling the military juggernaut and participating in the reconstruction of Europe. For his troops peace was a trying situation. Like George Washington, Pershing had a reputation for being aloof and a strict disciplinarian, a stern soldier who tolerated no deviation from the established code and who reputedly had little regard or feeling for his troops. Citizen-soldiers were treated with the same demanding approach that he had used with professionals in earlier campaigns, and they chafed under the regimen that he insisted be continued. His reputation sank to new lows as the doughboys castigated him for the endless stream of make-work assignments and unnecessary inspections to which he was habitually late. As a candidate, one of his more arduous tasks would be to overcome the antipathy of over two million overseas veterans who had become voters.⁶ The journalist Heywood Broun noted that "the boys will never call him 'Papa Pershing' . . . The sympathetic touch which makes a popular hero, even tho severe, was lacking."⁷

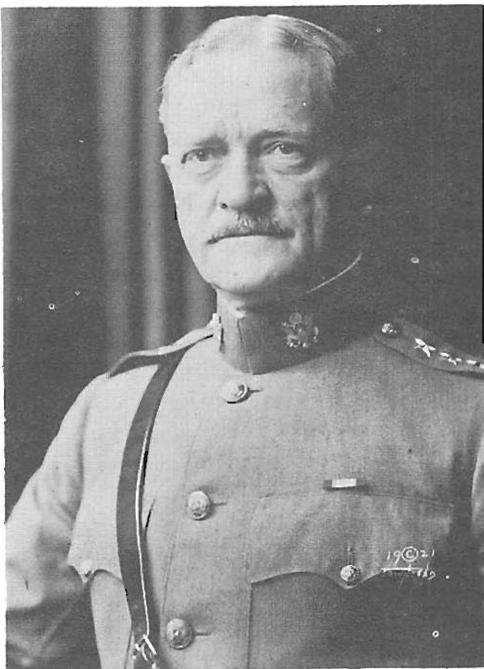
The speculation generated by "The Pershing Republican League" annoyed the general and he consulted his old friend and subordinate, Brigadier General Charles Gates Dawes, commanding general of the Service of Supply, as to how he might stifle the rumors. Dawes advised that he ignore the gossip and make no public statement, but within two months Pershing disregarded that advice and released to the press a letter from his secretary to James Brackin of Greenville, Pa. "He thanks you for the compliments you pay him," the letter explained, "but he is concerned only with his military duties and he feels that he could not consistently become interested in anything which would divert his attention from them." With the presidential campaign a year or more in the future, Pershing was his usual cautious self, explaining his lack of interest in the White House was because a soldier's duty must take precedence over personal ambition.⁸

Spring at Pershing's Paris headquarters was greeted by a new round of rumors as Frank H. Hitchcock, former chairman of the Republican National Committee, stopped to visit. Though friends of Hitchcock protested that the meeting was purely social and incidental to other business, political gossip had it that he was sounding out the AEF commander. An eleven-installment biography in *Worlds Work*, already half way through his life, could be accepted as a response to public interest in the general; but coupled with the publication in May of a laudatory biography suitable as campaign literature, it could only fuel the speculative aura.⁹

In late June, the general received a letter from a friend and loyal subordinate, Colonel George S. Patton, Jr., urging him to seek the presidency. Observing that Leonard Wood was being touted as presidential timber because of his organizational ability, Patton reminded Pershing that he too had demonstrated significant organizational talent, and he chided his superior for not advertising himself more. While pleased by the letter, the general submitted that any presidential boom would be premature and he counseled delay to determine what the people wanted. In the meantime, the post-war army needed a complete reorganization and the general planned to direct it.¹⁰

The Democratic administration was apparently not alarmed by the rumor of Pershing as a potential opponent and made no move either to quash the speculation or to alter his public posture. Quite the contrary, in July, President Wilson enhanced the general's reputation by recommending to Congress that he be rewarded with the permanent rank of general in the tradition of Washington and Grant and that the appointment be made in such a fashion as to give Pershing precedence over any other officer, including his current superior, Chief of Staff Peyton C. March.¹¹

In late August, the House conducted a brief and one-sided debate over the question of a permanent generalship. The climax came when Representative Guy Campbell (R-Pa.) proclaimed that "the people of this country and the House [should] put aside our partisanship, our adherence to Democracy and Republicanism, and make him unanimous choice of the conventions next year and elect him President of the United States." With that suggestion in mind, only four congressmen



John J. Pershing

would be recorded in the negative.¹² Within a week, and with less ostentation, the Senate concurred.

While Congress debated, General Pershing was enroute home after an absence of nearly three years. His reception in New York was like that of a returning Caesar as thousands lined Fifth Avenue to catch a glimpse of the most heroic figure of World War I. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker read a statement of praise from a grateful President and a thankful nation and presented him with his commission as the first permanent general since Phillip Sheridan and as the first general of the armies since George Washington.¹³

In the course of an endless stream of public appearances in Gotham, General Pershing addressed ten thousand members of the New York American Legion, which was holding its first state convention. When the remarks of the meeting's chairman "took a decided political turn," the general rose and "emphasized the fact that the American Legion was not and should not be a political organization."¹⁴ His ideas about the presidency in flux, Pershing did not endeavor to groom the American Legion as the fulcrum of his support. Conversely, Pershing's exhorta-

tion may have been an effort to neutralize the Legion in the event he chose to run. Realizing that his problem of popularity with the troops might well preclude an endorsement, he could have been attempting to deny the opposition, especially General Wood, the benefit of organized support from the veterans.

His popularity was at its zenith as his New York headquarters was flooded with invitations from scores of cities requesting a personal appearance. Secretary Baker advised him to accept some from the South and Midwest, evidently unconcerned that the general's political stature might grow or perhaps expecting that his popularity might benefit the administration and assist in the President's crusade to join the League of Nations. Several GOP congressmen were also urging him to travel "so that their constituents might have an opportunity of welcoming the headquarters of the American Expeditionary Force." Pressed by representatives of both parties, Pershing confided to his diary that he was undecided for he had a great deal of work before him and "because I fear that the motives of my traveling about may be misinterpreted."¹⁵

Perplexed about the future, Pershing once again sought the advice of his more politically astute friend, Dawes, a power in the Illinois Republican Party who had recently returned to his banking business in Chicago. He wrote Dawes that he was hesitant about traveling, fearful "that there would be considerable reaction at an inopportune time."¹⁶ President Wilson had recently embarked on his national tour promoting the League of Nations, and though it was too soon to determine which way the country would fall in his protracted struggle with the Senate, there was evidence of a growing anti-European, anti-militarist reaction.

Dawes hurriedly replied, agreeing that it was wise to move cautiously, but reminding Pershing that "the reception that you have had has negatived any impression which your evil wishers attempted to create that you are not at the present time our leading national character." When he did travel, Dawes encouraged the general to come to Chicago where the banker would hold a veto over local arrangements, and he promised to preside over an auditorium meeting where "I might say something about your business and diplomatic abilities in addition to your military achievements, which, because of the local publicity it

would receive, might do good." Dawes followed up his letter with a telephone call, relaying the news that factions in Chicago were making a political question over who would entertain the general. With that, Pershing informed the press that he was postponing any traveling. He then left for Washington where he led the National Victory Parade and appeared before a joint session of Congress to receive formally the nation's expression of gratitude. After two hectic but gratifying days in the Capital, he departed for a month long vacation.¹⁷

While vacationing, Pershing received a strongly worded letter from Dawes updating him on the political situation. Observing that the "admirable way in which you have conducted yourself has made you strong with our people," Dawes argued that "the people are tired of 'pussy foot' politics."

Your strength with the people lies in the fact that you are above and beyond timidity in everything. No sincere and wise counsellor will suggest to you, in my opinion, any attitude of deference to former public sentiment.

With the hope of the country lying "in the fact that the business element is willing and is preparing to fight radicalism to the last ditch," the Republican politico seemed to be encouraging the role of the man on horseback who might lead the people in their hour of need. Dawes closed by saying that "irrespective of any feeling on your part that I can be of no assistance, which position I attribute to your ignorance, I may have a few suggestions to make to you in the next two months."¹⁸

The tone of Dawes' letter was firm, offering reassurance to a hesitant candidate. Though Dawes could claim that the general had overcome any negative sentiment, Pershing had reason to be doubtful. Two weeks earlier, Representative Thomas Schall (R-Minn.) had told his colleagues that he was mounting a personal campaign "to do what I could to thwart the ambitions for the Presidency of a man absolutely unfit for office." The blind Minnesotan remarked that Pershing "was an unworthy officer, an un-American, unrepresentative officer," a coward who had treated enlisted men brutally. Schall's indictment was a continuation of earlier accusations that Pershing had systematically eliminated any officer who "ranked him or showed ability," had used the Committee on Public Information to build up a "colossal advertising and propaganda machine," and

had been a candidate "ever since the war began." The congressman also claimed to have a friend who had seen a letter from Pershing to Floyd Gibbons of the *Chicago Tribune* directing the latter to launch his campaign for the presidency.¹⁹

Schall's criticisms bore fruit in late October when Representative Isaac Sherwood (R-Ohio) requested an investigation to ascertain when and where General Pershing had ever been to the battle front during the war. The Republican octogenarian was roundly applauded for his comment that "'safety first' for a war hero does not appeal to me," while also submitting that "cruelty and lack of human sympathy are not the shining attributes of a great general."²⁰

Schall and Sherwood were minor and somewhat maverick congressmen, but no one could be certain as to how much controversy they could generate or how much sentiment they represented, particularly when they contended that their charges were based on information provided by veterans. But bolstered by Dawes' words of reassurance, Pershing moved discreetly ahead, announcing that he would conduct an inspection tour of the nation's military facilities.²¹ He would visit most of the country's larger cities and the people would see him, but it would be within the context of a "business trip" during which he could control the exposure, varying it according to the response he evoked.

Throughout his military career, General Pershing had invariably exercised caution and restraint. He rejected grand strategy, focusing on limited problems and the foreseeable future. This tactic had reaped military dividends, but a campaign for the White House demanded grand strategy; day to day maneuvering was insufficient. He spent November mapping his itinerary, completing his report on the AEF, and taking political soundings with his political advisors. The details of these conversations were not recorded, but the evidence indicates that his indecision was continuing, fortified by contradictory advice.²²

His father-in-law, Senator Francis Warren, former chairman of the Military Affairs Committee and currently chairman of the Appropriations Committee, perceived the general's political future differently than had Dawes. Though impressed by the New York reception and naturally sympathetic, the Wyoming

Republican was reluctant to commit himself at such an early date. He told Will Hays, chairman of the Republican National Committee, that he was interested only "in nominating somebody who with due effort, we can elect." To a friend in Cheyenne, Warren confided that Pershing was not a candidate and to tempt him to be one would "take a unanimous and all-prevailing pull which of course will not occur, and even if it did he might be like General Sherman!" Sensing a change in the political winds since the euphoria of the Armistice a year earlier, he offered the prediction that "while I may be entirely wrong, my personal feeling is that the convention will not decide upon a military officer for our candidate."²³

While Warren was hedging, Dawes plunged forward, journeying to Lincoln, Nebraska, the community where he and Pershing had met and spent their young manhood, to address five hundred members of the Commercial Club shortly before Thanksgiving. His remarks focused on the general, "incomparably the strongest American of today," whom he accorded sole credit for winning the war. Denying that Pershing was unpopular with the troops, he added that even if he was, "it would be because he enforced stern ideas of discipline and did his duty, and not because he was running for office."²⁴

Elated by his reception, Dawes reported immediately to the general: "Irrespective of the fact that you are not a candidate for the presidency and without having coupled your name publicly with that important place, I think I can say that as a result of my visit to Lincoln and my public address there, that that state will probably come in for you." Affairs were left in the hands of the Woods brothers—Mark, Frank and George—"and they are worth any 100 professionals in the state. Everything is in good shape out there." The eldest of the Woods brothers, Mark, was a close friend of both Dawes and Pershing.²⁵

Encouraged by Dawes, Mark Woods announced his plans for a Pershing boom in Nebraska. He told reporters that "we think he is entitled to the position of chief executive whether he wants it or not. We have not consulted him about pushing his candidacy and we are not going to." Simultaneous with Woods' proclamation, and after some prodding by the Democratic secretary of war as to what his plans were after he completed

his AEF report, the general announced his itinerary, the highlight of which would be a week in Lincoln over Christmas to visit his son Warren and his two sisters, Miss Mae Pershing and Mrs. D. M. (Bessie) Butler. His sisters had been living in Lincoln since the general's days as commandant of the University of Nebraska Cadet Corps in the early 1890's, and they were raising his son Warren, the only survivor of a tragic fire in 1915 that had taken the lives of his wife and three daughters.²⁶

Mark Woods had less than a month to establish a working organization before the holiday visit, and he moved first to build a base within local civic organizations, making a quick speaking tour of several groups promoting the general's candidacy. The response was sympathetic and several clubs expressed a desire to have the general address them, but they were noncommittal when it came to active support or even endorsement. Rebuffed, Woods moved to form his own group from the bottom up and announced an organizational meeting for December 10, 1919.²⁷

Approximately three hundred people, including many of Lincoln's social and civic leaders, attended the meeting. Woods was elected chairman of the national "Pershing for President" club. A veteran organizer from the Chautauqua circuit, E. J. Silas, was named state campaign manager, and a special women's committee was created to direct an appeal to the new segment of the electorate. Pledge cards were distributed and a telegram of support from the Commercial Club of Laclede, Missouri, Pershing's birthplace, was read. Woods was so encouraged by the initial response that he predicted a fifth ballot victory, and he pressed forward to form a second organization, "The Nebraska University Alumni Pershing for President Association."²⁸

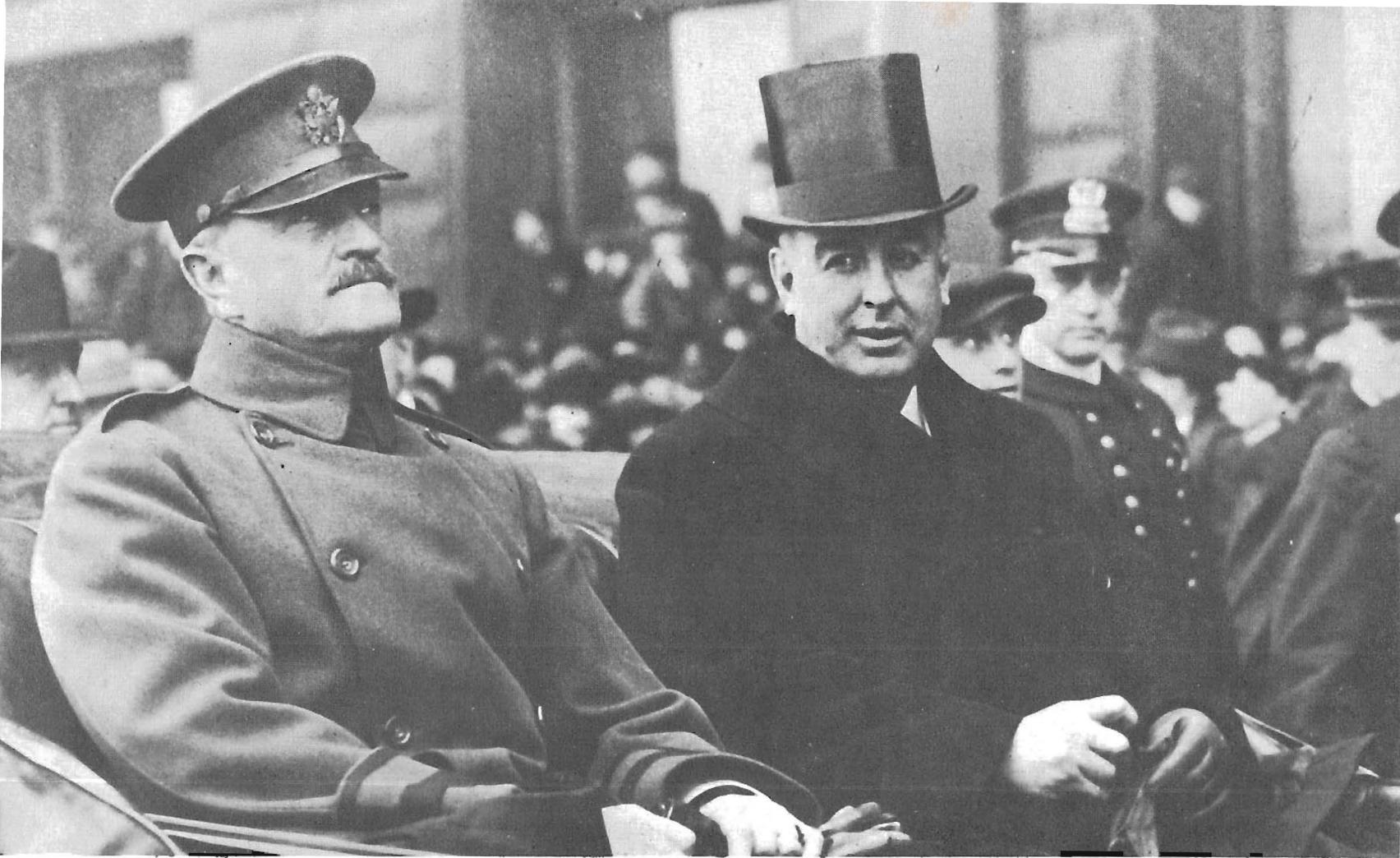
Building a statewide organization for the April primary meant almost exclusive use of well-meaning amateurs or professionals who were out of touch with the regular organization. In spite of Mark Woods' claims to the contrary, supporters of Leonard Wood had captured most of the party regulars before the Pershing balloon went up. The political strength of Senator George Norris plus that of the rapidly expanding Non-Partisan League was expected to go to Senator Hiram

Johnson. The Republican State Central Committee pledged neutrality in the intra-party struggle, but Lieutenant Governor P. A. Barrows and National Committeeman R. O. Howell were already involved in the Wood camp. The Pershing forces could occasionally call on a professional such as ex-Senator Elmer J. Burkett, a classmate of the general at the University of Nebraska law school, but they generally would rely on prominent but politically inexperienced citizens in the Lincoln area, men such as S. H. Burnham of the First National Bank, Colonel Frank Eager, Harvey Rathbone, and E. F. Pettis, all competitor-friends of Woods in the real estate business. Woods would later remark that he and his novice friends were going to teach the professionals a lesson, but amateurism would prove to be a continual weakness, particularly when those amateurs were drawn from only one segment of the population, the urban, business, and professional elite.²⁹

The strategy for capturing the sixteen Cornhusker State votes at the Republican convention was quite simple: present Pershing as a favorite son candidate and rely on voter loyalty to a "native" Nebraskan. Like most professional soldiers, the general lacked a permanent residence, but he had lived in Lincoln from 1891 to 1895 and his family continued to live there. It was not quite the same as being native-born, but hopefully his forces could develop an image comparable to that of Senator George Norris or William Jennings Bryan, who were also born elsewhere.

Both groups relied heavily on the mail to promote their campaign. The alumni organization sent out 10,000 letters along with one hundred telegrams to nationally known alumni, a quarter of which were rapidly returned with positive responses. The regular committee sent another 10,000 letters to prominent Nebraskans and made 5,000 photographs available. The form letters, which attracted the desired national as well as local attention, called for personal support and assistance in circulating petitions and pledge cards, but financial contributions were not solicited. For the next few months, the Woods brothers and their friends would pay the bills to staff a headquarters with as many as twenty clerks and other expenses such as printing, advertising, and mailing.³⁰

While Mark Woods was making progress in Nebraska, General Pershing was on his inspection tour, moving south from



Pershing was welcomed to Chicago in 1919 by William Hale Thompson, mayor and Illinois Republican leader.

Washington and then back north until he reached Chicago just before Christmas. The trip had been uneventful until he entered the Windy City and was greeted with the news that George Woods had just opened a "Nebraska Pershing for President Club" with the promise that "Pershing clubs will be formed in every state of the union." The opening, coupled with the general's meeting with several GOP luminaries including Mayor William Hale Thompson, Fred V. Upham, former treasurer of the Republican National Committee, and Dawes, was deemed sufficient cause for the *Washington Post* to run a front-page story sympathetic to his candidacy under the banner, "Pershing Boom Real."³¹

With newspaper speculation mounting and with Representative Thomas Schall renewing his attack, denials of political intentions were rapidly issued. An "unidentified source close to the General" told the press that "of course men have talked of General Pershing as a Presidential possibility. It is only natural. But General Pershing is not a candidate in any sense of the term." There was no change in his public position that "he was not in politics and would not be so long as he remained in the army." When political gossip settled on Dawes as the man behind the Pershing boom, he denied that his friend was a candidate and he unequivocally stated: "I will not be the manager of anybody's campaign. I am out of politics."³²

So emphatic were the denials that Mark Woods feared they would deflate the Nebraska movement. He held a hurried news conference to inform local reporters that he still intended to draft Pershing and that the national headquarters would remain in Lincoln. "I feel that I have made it plain from the very beginning that his consent was not being asked; that this was a movement to draft him for the Republican nomination." Woods charged that "no man has the right to say that Pershing will not be a candidate for President." Privately he wrote Dawes that he presumed that the Chicagoan had been misquoted and he assured him that all was going well in Nebraska, particularly with the female vote as they were "going to organize the women of Nebraska as the women of no state were ever organized before."³³

Pershing fled from the political hotbed of Chicago to spend a leisurely day reminiscing with old friends at his Laclede,

Missouri, birthplace before moving on to Lincoln for the Christmas holidays. His week in Lincoln was hectic and ostensibly non-political, his days filled with a seemingly unending round of banquets and receptions. Probing reporters were thrust aside with a terse comment: "I have neither inclination nor time to talk politics."³⁴

The most politically significant event during the general's stay was the purchase of the home where his family had been living. Intending to remodel and expand the residence to accommodate a retired general, he told reporters that he planned to send his son to the state university "and as soon as I retire, as far as I now know, I expect to enter business here." Enhancing his image as a favorite son, Pershing nostalgically told the Kiwanis Club: "I have always considered Nebraska at least one of my homes, but today I confess that it is the most important of them all." To his friend Dawes the general wrote that "this settles the question of residence," a decision that Mark Woods found eminently satisfying.³⁵

With Pershing receiving the adulation of Lincoln, Leonard Wood's managers reached for some of the spotlight. The day after Christmas, Frank Corrick, Theodore Roosevelt's Nebraska chairman in 1912 and now Wood's director, filed nominating petitions which gave his candidate the first line on the ballot. Mark Woods had been hoping that political courtesy might prevail and other hopefuls would concede Nebraska to its favorite son. Against the advice of his managers, Frank Lowden had done just that, but General Wood declined, viewing the primary route as his best means for securing the nomination. Confident that Pershing would carry Nebraska easily, Mark Woods accepted the challenge, believing a primary battle between the two generals would enhance the importance of the Nebraska race and help convince skeptical Easterners that the Middle West was solid for Pershing.³⁶

As the new year dawned, Pershing stopped briefly in Omaha before moving westward on his inspection tour, and Mark Woods redoubled his efforts to expand the movement. The general's younger brother James, a New York City clothier, was enlisted and he quickly became as ardent as the Woods brothers. When he preemptorily declared that his brother would run if drafted, the general's aide, Colonel John G. Quekemeyer,

hurried a dispatch to Dawes questioning the younger Pershing's judgment and suggesting that he be curbed. The general's tour was going so well Quekerneyer wished nothing done that could be embarrassing or harmful to his superior's growing popularity.³⁷

Pressure was also being applied by the Woods brothers and James Pershing on Senator Warren to commit himself and to use his influence to attract Eastern votes. But having heard nothing from Dawes or Pershing in recent weeks, he evaded their blandishments. Expressing near hostility at their amateurism, he argued that you cannot have a "pussy foot, quiet, underground campaign" with a prominent senator stumping for his son-in-law. Not until the general declared, would Warren use his good offices, and he urged that an open declaration be avoided as long as possible and that Pershing's name not be entered in the Nebraska primary. The dark horse route, Warren believed, was Pershing's only chance for success, and a meager one at that. But to be a viable dark horse meant to remain out of the running completely until convention time. The senator thought it would be a "nice compliment" if Wyoming, Nebraska, and Missouri should cast their first ballots for the hero of the AEF, but unless the "unexpected should happen," his sentiments would be with Frank Lowden. Publicly, he stuck to the position that the general was not a candidate nor would he be one and that what was going on in neighboring Nebraska was none of his concern.³⁸

Coincident with Senator Warren's efforts to avoid entanglement in a campaign to nominate a soldier, another Republican senator offered a similar belief that a military man could not win. Ohio Senator Warren Harding wrote that he was "rather interested in the development of the Pershing candidacy," and although he thought Nebraska's favorite son more deserving than Leonard Wood, Harding believed that the general "did not ring that bell which heralds popular hero worship." To Malcolm Jennings of the Ohio Manufacturers Association, Harding commented: "It is a curious thing, we made presidents out of military men for more than thirty years after the Civil War but there doesn't seem to be any sentiment for a military candidate at the present time." In the case of Wood particularly, the future President predicted that "his military connection and his militaristic ideas are going to put an end to his candidacy."³⁹

Two Republican senators might be pessimistic, but Mark Woods forged ahead with the immediate if mundane problems of organizing Nebraska. In early January, a Pershing club was formed in suburban Lincoln, and a small crowd was addressed by Guy C. Chambers, a young attorney, veteran, and member of the Pershing alumni group. Avoiding the fundamental question of the desirability of a military hero as President (and considerable anti-military feeling had been generated by the debates over universal military training and the League of Nations), Chambers chose to defend Pershing's reputation with the troops. The Lincoln attorney acknowledged that his former commander was a strict disciplinarian and that he had chafed under the regimen, but now that he was home and had time for mature reflection, he realized that discipline had won the war. Charles Dawes had asserted a similar belief during the general's visit to Chicago, arguing that Pershing sacrificed his popularity to win the war and that discipline had been the key to victory and to saving lives.⁴⁰

The Pershing forces might claim that stories that the general was unpopular with the troops were part of a smear campaign, but most of the energy would go to refuting that charge. Much of their advertising and many of their public statements were directed toward portraying the candidate as a kind and generous figure with an emphasis on his humanness, something the other candidates took for granted. Little effort was expended to promote his virtues, to illustrate his talents.

Lacking endorsements from any veterans' organizations and to prove that the general did have the support of his troops, the "Soldiers and Sailors for Pershing Club" was formed in Omaha. This would also be the principal group for rallying votes there. Captain C. E. Adams, past commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, was named chairman and John J. Baldwin, former director of the Lowden campaign in Nebraska, was made secretary. Mark Woods was particularly gratified by Baldwin's conversion, though Frank Corrick would attack the shift as evidence that Pershing was a stalking horse for Lowden. Defections from Leonard Wood's following, in addition to endorsements from prominent individuals such as O. G. Smith, president of the National Farmers' Congress, also pleased the Nebraska coterie.⁴¹

The "Soldiers and Sailors for Pershing Club" proved to be an industrious group, soliciting by mail nearly every veteran in the state and working especially diligently among veterans of Leonard Wood's former command, the Eighty-ninth Division. Their form letter emphasized the recurrent theme of how discipline had been necessary in winning the war and saving their lives, and asked them to remember their old commander on election day. Woods reported to Dawes:

The ex-service men of the State are now coming to the realization that our friend was one of them, that he was their leader in putting across the biggest thing in history, that they have more to expect from a fellow soldier than a civilian, and they are lining up for him just as the returned soldiers of the Civil War lined up solidly for Grant.

The news of the veterans' activities, coupled with the growing belief that no Republican would enter the convention with a majority, boosted Pershing's stock and that of other dark horses.⁴²

Conflicting with the organizational drive were Pershing's problems with Congress and the administration. While the general was in the hinterlands on his tour, Congress was debating an army reorganization bill which included an amendment making him chief of staff. Secretary of War Baker, while noting the cordial relationship between himself and the general, objected to making Pershing chief of staff by legislative fiat—"impolitic" legislation which, he thought, was an unnecessary invasion of the prerogatives of the commander-in-chief and a possible step toward military autocracy.⁴³

With Baker in opposition to the appointment and having indicated no future plans for Pershing, several senators expressed concern lest the general be shelved in some useless capacity. The secretary calmed their fears, assuring the senators that Pershing would be assigned only the most important duties, but he did not volunteer an example. Senator Howard Sutherland (R-W. Va.) offered the suggestion that the general be made head of the Joint Board of Defense of the Army and Navy with responsibility for the annual maneuvers, and Baker concurred.⁴⁴

The important assignments of which Baker spoke never came, and by convention eve Pershing was publicly airing his displeasure at having been ignored. From the conclusion of his inspection tour in February until June, the general's time was

absorbed with ceremonial duties. Much of May was spent on an inspection tour of the Panama Canal Zone. The Wilson Administration may well have been limiting his public exposure, though he noted in his diary that Baker "gave me full authority to make any visits in the United States that I might deem advisable." But instead of traveling or clandestinely campaigning, he limited his political activities to private conferences with Senator Warren, Dawes, his brother James, and the Woods brothers.⁴⁵ Not only were the Nebraska forces touting a reluctant candidate, they were touting a decreasingly visible one.

Declining visibility and Washington political machinations would prove to be minor nuisances compared to what the future held. February closed with a blow that racked the entire organization and for a time threatened to ruin three months' work. Someone unknown to Pershing or the Woods brothers filed nominating petitions in the early April Michigan primary. State law required only one hundred signatures, all of which were gathered in Port Huron. With the assumption spreading that Mark Woods or one of his friends was responsible, the Lincoln realtor penned a quick denial to Dawes, suggesting that the general withdraw or, if that was impossible, vigorously deny that he was a contender. Lowden and Johnson were too well organized to expect victory in a primary that was but a month away. But notice of the filing came too late for Pershing to withdraw officially and he simply ignored it.⁴⁶

Shortly after the Michigan fiasco Senator Warren dispatched his private secretary, Percy Spencer, to Lincoln to survey the political situation. According to Mark Woods, Spencer's report was pessimistic, so much so that the usually ebullient campaign manager was melancholy. The tide would turn, Woods thought, when the general revisited Nebraska. In the interim he urged that Pershing continue his denials but to remind the electorate that he was not in the habit of shirking responsibility. As for Senator Warren, Woods complained that he "had not turned a single stone to assist" and he believed that the senator's procrastination was costing the support of some of the most prominent men in the state. The national director also thought that a good advertising man could be of inestimable value in the closing month of the campaign and he petitioned Dawes for



Charles G. Dawes, later vice-president under Calvin Coolidge, was instrumental in launching Pershing's unsuccessful bid for the Presidency.

assistance. Though funds were running short and public solicitation was now necessary, Woods promised to pay a good salary to the right man. An earlier attempt to secure the services of George Rothwell Brown of the *Washington Post* had failed, though Brown would contribute several front page articles favorable to Pershing's candidacy.⁴⁷

The desperation of the Nebraska forces for journalistic help had been revealed in February when Mark Woods appeared before the Nebraska Press Association to explain his \$500 contribution to the N. P. A. According to Woods, the association secretary O. C. Buck had approached him with an offer to examine campaign literature and to stamp N. P. A. approval on items suitable for publication as news or editorial material in exchange for a contribution.⁴⁸ Though the situation was tense, the press association blunder quietly faded, and neither Wood nor Johnson used it against Pershing.

The day after Woods' criticism of his lack of support, Senator Warren made his only gesture of the campaign. Using Percy Spencer as an intermediary, he engaged Frank Barrow, secretary to his Wyoming colleague Representative Frank W. Mondell, to direct publicity in Washington. Barrow intended to write a series of articles emphasizing Pershing's many attributes, and if all went well, the Washington correspondent of the *Houston Chronicle* and eventual biographer of Dawes, Bascom Timmons, would come west to assist. If Woods desired, the senator also offered to provide the services of Judge V. H. Stone, "an orator of national fame." Pershing suggested that Stone's talents be utilized to induce "wavering leaders" in Nebraska to join the movement and he made his extensive scrapbooks available to Barrow to provide material for his articles.⁴⁹

The Nebraska strategy of heavy mailings (reputedly as many as two hundred thousand letters), advertising in most of the state's newspapers, and regular press releases, frequently in plate form, made money a critical item. Having already donated a substantial sum of his own money and time, Mark Woods called on Dawes several times for cooperation in raising more funds, and he was irritated that Senator Warren had not contributed. Warren and his family were feeling the pressure and he wrote his son Fred, instructing him not "to permit them to assess you a single penny for political purposes—not anybody nor for any reasons."⁵⁰

Stories circulating Washington about heavy expenditures by all candidates were beginning to alarm the general. Fearing the backlash that already had engulfed Leonard Wood and would soon cripple Frank Lowden, Pershing wrote Dawes that he desired "that every influence that can be exerted by all clean candidates and their friends to prevent this prostitution should be used." Continuing, he criticized the way his campaign was being administered, suggesting that "there has not been enough detailed work done." It was his opinion that "possibly too much reliance has been placed in circulars, letters, and advertisements. It appears to me more of a mail campaign than a personal one." Speaking as someone with considerable experience in organizational work, he pointed to the necessity of building morale among the "great army of voters," and he stressed the need for "preparation by organization." The general counseled his Chicago advisor to "give him [Woods] some positive direction based upon your own experience in military as well as political battles," while suggesting that more work be done with people of importance, particularly the congressional delegation.⁵¹

Dawes responded as he had on earlier occasions with words of encouragement and reassurance: "I think everything in Nebraska is going in good shape. It is a clean-cut fight. Nothing is being neglected that I can see." He may have put some credence in the general's remarks and passed them along, however, for two days later Mark Woods announced a new direction in the campaign. Plans were underway for more personal contact with the electorate in a drive to accelerate registrations, especially women's, and to turn out the vote on election day.⁵²

In the final analysis General Pershing's criticisms of the conduct of his campaign proved to be exceedingly accurate. The personal touch was missing, partially because of his own reluctance to commit himself. The principal thrust of the campaign had been and would continue to be mailings, advertisements, and press releases. When it came to converting the doubtful, Mark Woods and, to a lesser degree, the general himself, were more concerned and impressed with endorsements by people of importance in the community than with working in the hustings with the average voter. The entire fabric of Pershing's organization was replete with an urban, business, and

professional, middle to upper class appeal in a state with a rural, agricultural, and lower to middle class constituency. Somehow, the common man, particularly the farmer, was to come to the wisdom of supporting General Pershing through a form letter or a newspaper advertisement.

Four months of work came to an end in April with the Michigan and Nebraska primaries. With no organization or campaign, just a name on a ballot and the reputation for which it stood, Pershing ran a distant fifth in Michigan with 18,000 votes, less than 5 percent of those cast.⁵³ Dawes interpreted the results optimistically, telling Pershing that he believed them to be "very helpful to the cause." The Detroit papers, however, viewed the situation differently. The *Free Press* editorialized that Hiram Johnson's victory could be partially attributed to his opposition to American military involvement in Siberia after the armistice and the *News* believed that a reaction to lavish use of campaign funds was integral to the victory.⁵⁴

Disappointment emanating from the Michigan primary was mitigated within a week when the *Literary Digest* announced its plans for surveying eleven million voters to determine their presidential preference and the non-candidate candidate Pershing was included on the mail ballot. The decision to include Pershing on the list was similar to that of the *Independent* a few months earlier to do a feature on the general along with other likely candidates.⁵⁵ These decisions were semi-official recognition by the press of contender status, and were reassuring to Mark Woods and his friends that the Eastern establishment was aware of their midwest operations.

The *Digest* posted only one week's results before the Nebraska balloting, but they were not encouraging. From a sampling of 25,000, Pershing polled only 213 first choice votes and was running eighth in a field of thirteen. He trailed not only Wood, who was leading with over half the vote, and Hiram Johnson, but he was also behind William Howard Taft and Charles Evans Hughes. So confident were Leonard Wood's managers, who saw their candidate running ahead in the total vote and in most regional and statewide races, that their election eve advertising forecast the results. General Pershing's supporters countered by noting that while Wood might be ahead nationally, in the Nebraska breakdown Senator Johnson

was leading "with Pershing one vote behind, and Wood third."⁵⁶

The closing days of the campaign proved to be hectic and exciting. Hiram Johnson's manager, Frank Harrison, announced that the California senator would not field a slate of convention delegates as the opposition had. Instead, since both the Wood and Pershing slates had promised to abide by the statewide results, Harrison endorsed all but one of Wood's delegates.⁵⁷ Needlessly caught unawares since the deadline for filing delegate petitions had long since passed, Mark Woods cried foul, saturating the newspapers with advertisements accusing the opposition of collusion to deny Pershing his rightful victory and the voters a fair election. Though Wood's manager, Frank Corrick, denied any prior knowledge of Harrison's maneuver, the state's two largest newspapers interpreted the endorsement as a lethal alliance, with the friendly *Lincoln Star* venturing that it would continue right up to the convention.⁵⁸

The damage of the Wood-Johnson "alliance" was offset somewhat by Hoover's direction to his supporters to cease their write-in campaign. Like Lowden, he was respecting the prerogative of a favorite son. The *Omaha Bee* expected the Hoover strength to devolve to the AEF commander if for no other reason than political expediency. A Pershing victory in Nebraska would stunt the drive of the other two candidates, whom the Hoover people interpreted to be the greater threats in Chicago.⁵⁹

On the heels of the delegate shuffling came the invasion of Nebraska by Hiram Johnson and Leonard Wood. Johnson was accompanied on his three-day tour by the popular George Norris. Wood, who had been on a ninety-day leave of absence but who had returned to Chicago to resume his duties in the face of a nation-wide rail strike, also rushed through to quell rumors that he was withdrawing.⁶⁰ Wood's last visit to Nebraska had been the previous October, when he brought troops to Omaha to put down a race riot, and he was thought to be popular with the Omaha business community. Both visits were brief and perfunctory as the candidates were in a hurry to return eastward to Illinois, Ohio, and elsewhere for primaries they deemed more significant.

With nearly everything seeming to be working against him, Pershing finally moved as Mark Woods had urged a month earlier. The *Washington Post* bannered it on page one: "Pershing Will Run." At a reception of the Nebraska Society held in Washington in his honor, General Pershing told the assembled dignitaries:

I am not unmindful of the cordial remarks that have been made this evening with reference to myself. Speaking of that great office with which you have been kind enough to connect my name, it seems fitting that I should say to you, my friends, that my whole life has been devoted to the service of our country, and while in no sense seeking it, I feel that no patriotic American could decline to serve in that high position if called upon to do so by the people.⁶¹

Before making his decision public, Pershing had conferred with Will Hays of the Republican National Committee. Because of the general's decision, Hays sent him a confidential report that he as chairman had given the committee in December. "In addition to members of the committee, I am having it read by those who are really seriously considered as candidates for the nomination."⁶²

The manner, timing, and content of the general's announcement was typical Pershing. His discussion with Hays may have been forthright, but his public declaration was circumscribed. He was not running, but he would accept a draft. Yet what he said rekindled the spirits of his Nebraska forces, and in the last five days of the campaign they redoubled their efforts, primarily through the medium of newspaper advertisements. The ever-present theme was that of the favorite son. Any qualifications the general might have to the contrary, Nebraskans were called upon to be loyal: "Give Tomorrow to Your State—Personal Choice Must Come Second."⁶³ Other notices pointed to his humanness or played upon the "Horatio Alger" theme, but in the heaviest advertising of the three candidates, the personal qualifications of General Pershing were almost overlooked. Little was done to convince the electorate of the merits of converting a talented general into a President.

Mark Woods closed the Pershing drive with a plea to Dawes to intercede with Frank Lowden. Since the governor was not in the Nebraska primary out of respect for a favorite son, Woods requested a public declaration to that effect. "Such a statement would strengthen Pershing's position and would be in strict harmony with Governor Lowden's previous action." Believing



Col. Frank D. Eager

himself to be a second choice to either general and not wishing to antagonize potential supporters in neighboring states should Wood begin to fade, Lowden declined.⁶⁴

A long campaign finally ended when the Nebraska voters went to the polls on April 20, 1920. A weekend snow storm in the western part of the state helped hold the vote under the predicted 200,000 and delayed returns from the rural areas. Despite the influx of women, the total vote in 1920 exceeded that of 1916 by only 296. But even with slow returns and a light turnout, it was clear from the first that Pershing was going down to a decisive defeat. The final tally found Hiram Johnson the victor with 63,262 votes or 47 percent of the total. Wood was second with 42,385 votes or 32 percent, and Pershing was third with 27,669 votes or 21 percent. Nebraska's favorite son carried only one of ninety-three counties, Lancaster (Lincoln), by the slimmest of pluralities, 35 percent, and he was second choice in another ten counties, most of which were clustered in the Lincoln area. Mark Woods lost a close vote for delegate from the first congressional district as many voters apparently split their ballot, voting either for Wood or for Johnson as their

presidential preference and for a convention delegate pledged to Pershing.⁶⁵

Leonard Wood carried seventeen counties, with his greatest strength in an arc running north to south along the Missouri River and on into the southeastern corner of the state. Omaha, despite Congressman Albert W. Jeffries' endorsement of Pershing, went for Wood. In the dual system of voting separately for President and for delegates, and with one slate of candidates standing for both Wood and Johnson, Wood's managers laid claim to the two delegates from the first congressional district since he carried that district, repudiating the promise that all delegates vote for the statewide preference.⁶⁶

To Hiram Johnson went the rest of the state. Though he ran strongest in the rural areas, he also ran a close second to Wood in the combined vote of Lincoln and Omaha, illustrating that the urban strength he had shown in Michigan might be less extraordinary than originally thought. Sentiment for the California Progressive was greatest in the wheat belt of the Platte River Valley, George Norris' home area in the southern part of the state, and those counties with a significant German-born population. Of the ten counties with the highest percentage of German-born in 1900, he lost only the lowest (Otoe) to Wood and carried the remaining nine by margins of from two to one, to five to one over his two military opponents combined.⁶⁷ Pershing's supporters had unsuccessfully attempted to minimize the German and Non-Partisan League support for Johnson "by getting the strongest non-partisan leaguer in the state to run for governor on the Democratic ticket."⁶⁸ Five of the six congressional districts and their delegates, as well as the four at-large votes, would be his in Chicago, a magnificent victory for the candidate who had the smallest and least financed organization of the three.

A disconsolate Mark Woods reported the results to Dawes. Expressing relief that Pershing had not personally campaigned, an exercise that Woods now believed would have been futile, he lamented that "we are not only beaten, but Pershing is the third man in the race . . . I am now fully convinced that the people meant it when they said that they did not want a military man, and am also convinced that the pro-German, dissatisfied, red

element are [sic] in the great majority." Woods doubted that the two generals together could have defeated Johnson.⁶⁹ Senator Warren analyzed the primary much as Woods had, but not having made much of an investment in it, his reaction was less emotional. He wrote his son Fred:

I don't like to be mean and classed with the old downright torments who are in the habit of saying "I told you so," and so, without pleasure, but with real sorrow, I have to say that I expected but little else, because it was not in the pictures for a military man who has been out of the country most of his life to get anywhere on a "don't want it" basis while suspected that under the "don't want it" was a "I sure do want it" feeling.⁷⁰

A week later the Wyoming Republican spoke with the general in a train station as the latter was enroute to Panama. Pershing expressed appreciation for the efforts on his behalf and "he treated the matter lightly, simply as a matter of water having passed under the bridge." The general's spirits may have been buoyed by the *Washington Post* analysis which continued to view him as a viable dark horse. The Nebraska results could not be held against him because his campaign was run by amateurs, Leonard Wood was far too well financed and organized, and Hiram Johnson was a natural choice in a state dominated by farmers, particularly anti-war German farmers. In short no one could reasonably have expected him to win. The spontaneous Michigan vote could not be discounted and Wyoming still intended to offer him to the convention.⁷¹

Bascom Timmons also saw hope flickering and he predicted ultimate triumph. Nebraska may have been lost, but Wyoming was solid and would be the key to victory. He believed "that the Nebraska election proved beyond a doubt . . . that the country would just as soon have a soldier for President as anyone else, provided he has the qualifications. In Nebraska, the vote for two high army officers greatly exceeded that of Hiram Johnson."⁷² Evidently the election returns were highly interpretive. General Pershing returned from Panama in late May politically invigorated and with his sights on the White House. He communicated to Dawes that he was receiving "in the form of letters and through personal contact with others, a lot of information that indicates considerable sentiment and belief that my name is in the minds of many people as more than a possibility in case of deadlock in the convention."⁷³

Accepting himself as "more than a possibility," the general urged his former subordinate to make preparations and to have

someone ready "at the proper time to spring it." An intelligent preparation of his qualifications "would make a strong appeal," and he proceeded to enumerate those qualifications in the form of his wartime accomplishments. "I think the result in Nebraska has had no serious effect and that it can be easily overcome by a few words of explanation, as can the objection to the 'stern soldier'." Lest Dawes misunderstand, Pershing reassured him that he was not having hallucinations.⁷⁴ Just days before the Republican convention was to open, Pershing sent a lengthy, handwritten message to Dawes, continuing to promote his dark horse candidacy. Believing neither Lowden nor Wood could win, he tendered several reasons as to why and how *he* could: (1) A strong case should be made to the "conservative element" that a dark horse could win. (2) Any talk against a military candidate could be offset when people met him and saw his human side, observing that this had been proven during his inspection tour. (3) The general suggested that it would be wise for the Republicans to claim credit for the participation in the war, an "unassailable" tactic. (4) Mark Woods could be helpful with his contacts and could explain the Nebraska vote. (5) Pershing perceived strength in the South, particularly Missouri, and he thought that he could break the Solid South. (6) He believed the veterans to be unanimous for him. (7) Though Senator Warren would not be there, Wyoming could be expected to keep his name before the convention.⁷⁵

Presuming that Dawes would handle affairs behind the scene, Pershing moved cautiously in public. While the Republicans were going through their opening-day festivities, the press reported that Pershing had inquired as to the possibility of being placed on the inactive list. No bridges were burned, and his letter to Secretary Baker was careful to note that he was not resigning, retiring, or requesting to be placed on the inactive list. The general was simply requesting information because "I wish to say that it has long been my desire to return to civil life." Denied the chief of staff position, he reflected that his duties required only a portion of his time and that as soon as the provisions of the Army Reorganization Act were completed, probably in a few months, he contemplated retirement. Given the apparent deadlock among the Republicans, some Washington observers thought his maneuver might stampede the convention.⁷⁶

The draft Pershing longed for did not come. His name never appeared before the convention, but his prediction of a dark horse winner was accurate. For the first time in forty years the Republicans turned to the Senate and nominated Warren Harding. Though denied, he savored the defeat of Leonard Wood. To Dawes he telegraphed: "The victory is ours. I die content."⁷⁷

The blow dealt Pershing by the Republicans was severe but not mortal. Simultaneously with Harding's drive for the nomination came the notice that Edward F. Goltra, Democratic national committeeman from Missouri, had invited Laclede, Missouri's favorite son to attend the San Francisco conclave. Goltra denied any ulterior motives such as nominating Pershing, but the idea of Pershing as the Democratic candidate was reinforced by Brooklyn party leader John H. McCooey, who proposed a ticket of Pershing and Alfred E. Smith of New York. McCooey promised to place the general's name in nomination and Assemblyman Louis Civillier, though not a delegate, volunteered his help.⁷⁸

Citing previous commitments with several Ivy League schools for honorary degrees, the general graciously declined the invitation. Reporters would not be content with his polite refusal. Having heard countless denials before, they besieged him with questions. Asked if he would accept the Democratic nomination, Pershing told reporters: "A man would be a fool to answer that question one way or the other when the nomination has not been tendered him." Pressed harder, he exclaimed: "Well, it hasn't been offered me yet!"⁷⁹ To the last, no one would believe that he did not want to be President.

The general's party preference was always Republican, but his candidacy fared better in San Francisco than Chicago. As the Democrats struggled for four days and forty-four ballots seeking a candidate who would carry the necessary two-thirds vote, one lone delegate on the twenty-fifth ballot cast his vote for General Pershing. Seven months of time, energy, and money had come to an end in the heat of San Francisco's Civic Auditorium.

Infected as the general was by "White House fever" in 1920, a residue may have remained. After Pershing's death in 1948, Henry Wales, a former war correspondent for the *Chicago*

Tribune and one of the few reporters he ever took into his confidence, recalled from Paris:

In 1928, he was hopeful that Andrew M. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury under Coolidge, would arrange for his nomination after Coolidge had announced, "I do not choose to run."

I happened to be in New York when the Republican convention was in Kansas City in June, 1928. I found General Pershing and his brother, James, in a suite in the Waldorf-Astoria with an open telephone to the convention hall.

Newspapers had mentioned the General as a dark horse, and Pershing's sudden return from Paris on June 11, three days before the convention opened, strengthened rumor that he would be a candidate.

Again the call to duty never came. Wales believed that "the general was disappointed, but he never mentioned it."⁸⁰

Thus, World War I did produce at least one military-hero candidate, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, and one might also argue that it produced a second in that much of Major General Leonard Wood's popularity could be attributed to his role in the preparedness campaign of 1914-1917 and his being denied a field command. Neither of course could be defined as a military-hero candidate in the sense of winning a party nomination, but the American people, some directly and others through their party representatives, did have an opportunity to embrace or reject candidates with a martial background. Wood tasted defeat in the bitterness of the Republican convention, but Pershing's downfall came much sooner in the ill-fated Nebraska primary. Much like the minor flourish for General Douglas MacArthur in 1944, the "Pershing for President" bubble burst, making but a ripple in a hard-fought campaign.

While there were two military candidates in the field of 1920, might one conclude that the American people in a fit of anti-militarism cast off a tradition and refused to nominate a national figure because he was a military officer? The post-primary reflections of Pershing's campaign manager Mark Woods and those of his politician-father-in-law Senator Warren drew that conclusion as did many others, but the evidence is not that clear. The machinations that ultimately resulted in the nomination and election of President Harding do not indicate a decisive rejection or acceptance of a particular type of candidate.

There is no doubt that a spirit of anti-militarism was growing throughout the campaign. Post-war euphoria was turning into

fear and trepidation about the same time Pershing returned from Europe. Domestic, economic, and social dislocations, along with the frustration and alienation produced by the Treaty of Versailles and its offspring, the League of Nations, helped create a demand for normalcy and a desire to forget the war. The idea of universal military training, advocated by both Wood and Pershing, raised the specter of a martial state and was rejected by both the public and Congress.

Conversely, the tumult from mid-1919 to mid-1920 (the "Red Scare") might also be interpreted as providing an atmosphere wherein a general could come to the fore and offer himself as a savior from chaos. Both Wood and Pershing, while speaking out against "revolutionary elements" within American society, eschewed that role, but Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer relished it until an adverse reaction set in.

Analyzing the reasons for General Pershing's defeat is complex, as we have seen. With a reluctant candidate, no program, amateur managers, and a localized campaign, the likelihood of success was indeed slim. What is most surprising in Pershing's run for the White House is that his presence and that of Wood in the Nebraska primary did not provoke an anti-military response. Although some of Pershing's advertising was designed to refute criticism of the idea of making a soldier into a President, neither general was attacked by Senator Johnson or by the newspaper for being a militarist. Rather than generating controversy, the infusion of two military hero candidates seems to have evoked apathy.⁸¹ With the potential electorate doubled by the inclusion of women, the total vote hardly exceeded that of 1916. There is no evidence of a significant anti-military turnout, and though Johnson was known for his anti-military, anti-League positions, he also had the support of the Non-Partisan League and some of his strength could be easily attributed to disgruntled farmers who had just come through the agricultural crash of 1919. Johnson included in his campaign the need for farm relief while his opponents ignored what was a very real issue, writing off discontent in Nebraska and elsewhere as a product of "red" agitation as opposed to legitimate economic grievances.

A well-known general with a well-organized campaign could have won the Republican nomination and the Presidency.

Pershing and Wood went down to defeat more because they ran inept and poorly organized campaigns than for any other reason. Military men who have gone from war to the White House have invariably accomplished that journey with the aid of skilled, civilian politicians who could chart the path, something both generals lacked. Being a general in 1920 was not the political asset it had once been and would later be, yet it was not an insurmountable handicap either. The problem in this instance was that the generals lacked that necessary political talent, not that the American public had turned on tradition and become anti-military. Presidential politics after World War II would decidedly illustrate that the nineteenth century tradition of military hero candidates had not abated in the twentieth century.

NOTES

1. Albert Somit, "The Military Hero as Presidential Candidate," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XII (Summer, 1948), 194-195. Somit's figures updated by author from 1948 to 1970. For a similar analysis of running generals for President see Dorothy B. and Julius Goebel, *Generals in the White House* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1945), 1-2.
2. Somit, "Military Hero," 200.
3. Bascom Timmons, *Portrait of An American, Charles Gates Dawes* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1953), 191-192; *Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 30, 1919.
4. For a comparison of the different roads pursued by Wood and Pershing in climbing the military hierarchy see Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 152-153.
5. *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1918.
6. Charles Phelps Cushing, "How John J. Doughboy Regarded John J. Pershing," *Leslie's Weekly*, CXXX (Sept. 6, 1919), 379.
7. Quoted in Junius B. Wood, "Pershing Known for His Firm Discipline," undated clipping (c. Jan., 1931), no source. Scrapbook materials, Pershing Collection, Lincoln, Nebraska State Historical Society, Box 1.
8. Charles Gates Dawes, *A Journal of the Great War* (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), I, 218, 223; *New York Times*, Feb. 20, 1919.
9. *New York Times*, April 13, 1919; see also Cushing, "John J. Doughboy," 379, for references to politicians in Paris in 1919 to sound out Pershing, who concluded his lack of popularity with troops made him unacceptable; George McAdam, "The Life of General Pershing," *Worlds Work*, XXXVII-XXXIX (Nov. 1918-Dec. 1919); Everett T. Tomlinson, *The Story of General Pershing* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1919).
10. Martin Blumenson (ed.), *The Patton Papers, 1885-1940* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1972), 706-707. See also Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1880-1939* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 208, 211-212.

11. *New York Times*, July 19, 1919.
12. U.S., Congress, House, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., Aug. 29, 1919, *Congressional Record*, LVII, 4463-4469.
13. *New York Times*, Sept. 8-9, 1919.
14. John J. Pershing Diary, Sept. 11, 1919, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5. Hereafter cited as Pershing MSS; *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 1919.
15. Pershing Diary, Sept. 12, 1919, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5.
16. Pershing to Dawes, Sept. 12, 1919, Pershing MSS, Box 59.
17. Dawes to Pershing, Sept. 15, 1919, Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Library, Special Collections Department, Dawes MSS, Box 44. Hereafter cited as Dawes MMS; Pershing Diary, Sept. 16, 1919, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5; *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1919.
18. Dawes to Pershing, Oct. 14, 1919, Dawes MSS, Box 44.
19. *Congressional Record*, Sept. 6, 1919, 4973-4976, Sept. 27, 1919, 6060-6061.
20. *Ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1919, 7441-7442.
21. *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1919.
22. Richard O'Connor, *Black Jack Pershing* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1961), 229; Pershing Diary, Nov. 3, 4, 16, December 2, 3, 1919, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5.
23. Percy Spencer to Stephen Packard, Oct. 9, 1919; Francis Warren to John W. Lacey, Oct. 11, 1919; to John J. Pershing, Oct. 11, 1919; to Fred Warren, Oct. 18, 1919; to Will Hays, Oct. 18, 1919; to W. E. Chapin, Nov. 4, 1919; to G. B. Talbott, Nov. 15, 1919; to E. E. Buck, Dec. 1, 1919, Laramie, University of Wyoming, Western History Research Center, Francis Warren MSS, Letterbook 88, 48, 80, 84, 134, 143-145, 287-89, 375, 498. Hereafter cited as Warren MSS.
24. *Lincoln Star*, Nov. 23, 1919.
25. Dawes to Pershing, Nov. 28, 1919, Dawes MSS, Box 44.
26. *Lincoln Star*, Nov. 26, 1919; Pershing Diary, Nov. 22, 1919, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5.
27. *Lincoln Star*, Nov. 28, Dec. 7, 1919; *Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 10, 1919.
28. *Lincoln Star*, Dec. 11-12, 1919; *Nebraska State Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1919; Pershing Folder, University of Nebraska Alumni Association. The general had received a law degree from the university in 1893.
29. *Lincoln Star*, Nov. 30, Dec. 3, 7, 1919; *New York Times*, April 21, 1921. See also signators to mailings in Pershing Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society, Box 1; folder on Pershing, University of Nebraska Alumni Association.
30. *Lincoln Star*, Dec. 14, 16, 19, 1919; *Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 19, 1919; *Washington Post*, Dec. 18, 1919; Pershing Scrapbook, Pershing MSS, Vol. 15, 9, 24, 43, 44; Woods to Dawes, April 8, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan. to June 1920.
31. *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1919; *Washington Post*, Dec. 22, 23, 1919.
32. *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1919; *Washington Post*, Dec. 23, 1919.
33. *Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 25, 1919; *New York Times*, Dec. 28, 1919; Woods to Dawes, Dec. 27, 31, 1919, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," July-Dec., 1919.
34. *New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1919.

35. *New York Times*, *Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 28, 1919; *Nebraska State Journal*, Dec. 27, 1919; Pershing to Dawes, Dec. 30, 1919, Dawes MSS, Box 44; Woods to Dawes, Dec. 27, 1919, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," July-Dec., 1919.
36. William T. Hutchinson, *Lowden of Illinois, the Life of Frank Lowden* (2 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 422; *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1920; *Lincoln Star*, Jan. 12, 14, 1920.
37. Col. John G. Quekemeyer to Dawes, Jan. 17, 1920, Dawes MSS, Box 44; *New York American*, Jan. 15, 1920, Pershing Scrapbook Collection, Pershing MSS, Vol. 15, 135.
38. Francis Warren to Fred Warren, Jan. 13, 15, 28, 1920; to C. W. Burdick, Feb. 13, 1920; to F. C. Bonfils, Feb. 13, 1920; to W. H. Atwell, Feb. 24, 1920; to E. H. Lederer, Feb. 21, 1920; Warren MSS, Letterbook 88, 774, 779-781, 898-899, 678; Letterbook 89, 43, 94, 98. The attitude consistently being taken by Senator Warren casts doubt on the argument that Pershing's candidacy was part of an Old Guard conspiracy to defeat Leonard Wood. For the conspiracy interpretation, see Wesley M. Bagby, *The Road to Normalcy, The Presidential Campaign and Election of 1920* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1962), 28; Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood, a Biography* (2 vols.; New York, Harper Brothers, 1931), II, 346; *Omaha World Herald*, April 16, 1920, *New York Times*, April 18, 1920. There is no question that ill-feeling existed between Wood and Pershing, primarily because of latter's promotion over former to command of the AEF. A desire to deny Wood the presidency existed in Pershing's mind, but it was of his own creation and secondary to his own ambition to be President.
39. Warren Harding to Frank Scobey, Jan. 20, 1920; to Malcom Jennings, Feb. 4, 1920, Columbus, Ohio Historical Society, Harding Papers, Microfilm Edition, Reel 22, Frame 0015 and Reel 261, Frame 0132.
40. Interview with Guy Chambers, Lincoln, Neb., June 22, 1971; *Lincoln Star*, Jan. 20, 1920; *Washington Post*, Dec. 24, 1919.
41. *Lincoln Star*, Feb. 13, 16, 1920; Woods to Dawes, Feb. 27, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920.
42. *Lincoln Star*, March 5, 1920; *New York Times*, March 15, 1920; Woods to Dawes, Feb. 27, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920. See Woods to Dawes, Dec. 27, 1920, *Ibid.*, Folder "W," July-Dec., 1919, for Pershing's impact on veterans while visiting Lincoln.
43. *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1920.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *New York Times*, March 1, June 8, 1920; Pershing Diary, March 25, 1920, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5. Because newspaper coverage for this period is sporadic since the general was doing little deemed newsworthy, it is necessary to rely on his diary to determine activities from February through June, 1920.
46. *Detroit News*, *Detroit Free Press*, Feb. 28, 1920; *Port Huron Herald*, Feb. 27, 1920; Woods to Dawes, March 3, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920.
47. Woods to Dawes, March 18, 19, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920; Francis Warren to Fred Warren, Jan. 13, April 21, 1920, Warren MSS, Letterbook 88, 774 and Letterbook 89, 644-645.
48. *Lincoln Star*, Feb. 28, 1920.

49. Spencer to Woods, March 20, 1920, Warren MSS, Letterbook 89, 400-402.
50. Woods to Dawes, no date (c. April 1, 1920), March 29, April 8, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920; Francis Warren to Fred Warren, April 9, 1920, Warren MSS, Letterbook 89, 555-556.
51. Pershing to Dawes, March 21, 1920, Dawes MSS, Box 44.
52. Dawes to Pershing, March 23, 1920, *Ibid.*; *Lincoln Star*, March 25, 1920.
53. *Detroit News*, April 10, 1920. Hiram Johnson had 157,000 votes, Leonard Wood 112,000, Frank Lowden 62,000, Herbert Hoover 52,000, *New York Times*, April 23, 1920.
54. Dawes to Pershing, April 6, 1920, Dawes MSS, Box 44; *Detroit Free Press*, April 8, 1920; *Detroit News*, April 6, 1920. See also "Michigan Boost for Johnson," *Literary Digest*, LXV (April 17, 1920), 36.
55. "The 'Digest's' Nation-Wide Presidential Poll," *Literary Digest*, LXV (April 10, 1920), 21; Donald Wilhelm "If He Were President — John J. Pershing," *Independent* XXXV (Sept. 27, 1919), 444ff.
56. "First Returns in the 'Digest's' Presidential Poll of the Nation," *Literary Digest*, LXV (April 17, 1920), 34-35; *Nebraska State Journal*, April 19, 1920. Votes in Nebraska according to *Digest* poll were Johnson 13, Pershing 12, Wood 10.
57. *Lincoln Star*, April 10, 1920. In Nebraska each voter cast ballots for his presidential preference, one each for two delegates at-large to the national convention, one for a delegate from his congressional district to the national convention. Thus it was conceivable that one candidate could win the statewide presidential preference vote, and find that part or all of the delegates to the national convention had endorsed an opponent. To preclude such a split each slate promised to abide by results of statewide presidential balloting, voting in Chicago for whoever carried Nebraska as opposed to whomever they were personally supporting.
58. *Ibid.*; *Omaha World-Herald*, April 11, 1920.
59. *Omaha Bee*, April 14, 1920.
60. Wood had been given permission by Secretary of War Newton Baker to run for the presidency without resigning his commission. Since Pershing was not a declared candidate, he needed no request. Advertisements for Pershing accused Wood of a conflict of interest, while "Pershing Has Always Been on the Job," *Lincoln Star*, April 17, 1920.
61. *Washington Post*, April 15, 1920; Pershing Diary, April 14, 1920, Pershing MSS, Box 4-5.
62. Hays to Pershing, April 15, 1920; Indianapolis, Indiana State Library, Will Hays Papers.
63. *Lincoln Star*, April 19, 1920.
64. Woods to Dawes, April 16, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920; Hutchinson, *Lowden*, 411.
65. The certified figure was 192, 329. Darius M. Amsberry, "Official Report of the Nebraska State Canvassing Board, State and Presidential Primary Election Held April 20, 1920," Secretary of State's Office, Lincoln, Neb., 4, 5, 8. See also editorial, "Presidential Apathy," *Nebraska State Journal*, April 1, 1920.
66. *Omaha World-Herald*, April 1, 1920; *Lincoln Star*, *New York Times*, April 23, 1920.
67. Conclusion based on a comparison of figures from Amsberry, "Official Report," 5, and Fredrick C. Luebke, *Immigrants and Politics. The Germans of*

Nebraska 1880-1900 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 191-192. See also *New York Times*, April 21, 1920.

68. Woods to Dawes, March 29, 1920, Dawes MSS, Numerical Letter File, Folder "W," Jan.-June, 1920.
69. Woods to Charles G. Dawes, April 21, 1920, *Ibid.*
70. Francis Warren to Fred Warren, April 21, 1920, Warren MSS, Letterbook 89, 643-645.
71. Francis Warren to R. A. Van Orsdel, April 29, 1920, *Ibid.*, 694; *Washington Post*, April 24, 1920.
72. Clipping, May 1, 1920, Pershing Scrapbook Collection, Pershing MSS, Vol. 17, 147.
73. Pershing to Dawes, May 26, Dawes MSS, Box 44. The letters of which Pershing spoke and other correspondence that might connect him to the presidency are missing from his papers at the Library of Congress. Only his scrapbook collection reveals an interest in the White House.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Pershing to Dawes, June 6, 1920, *Ibid.*
76. *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, June 8, 1920.
77. Pershing to Dawes, June 13, 1920, Dawes MSS, Box 44.
78. *New York Times*, June 12, 18, 1920.
79. *Ibid.*; June 16, 1920.
80. Henry Wales, "Pershing — a Personal Reminiscence," *Omaha World-Herald*, Oct. 28, 1949, in Pershing Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society, Box 1; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease, Stories I Tell Friends* (New York: Avon Books, 1968), 203-204.
81. Editorial, "Presidential Apathy," *Nebraska State Journal*, April 1, 1920.