



*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: William Jennings Bryan, *World-Herald* Editor

Full Citation: Paul V Peterson, "William Jennings Bryan, *World-Herald* Editor," *Nebraska History* 49 (1968): 348-371

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1968BryanEditor.pdf>

Date: 12/04/2015

Article Summary: Gilbert Hitchcock, needing financial support in order to buy typesetting machines for his newspaper, engaged Bryan as editor. He expected that the politician and his friends would buy shares of stock in the paper. Bryan provided only limited editorial and fundraising help.

Cataloging Information:

Names: William Jennings Bryan, Gilbert M Hitchcock, Richard L Metcalfe, G A Luikart, Tom Allen, W H Thompson

Nebraska Place Names: Omaha

Keywords: *Omaha World-Herald*, William Jennings Bryan, Gilbert M Hitchcock, typesetting machines, Mergenthaler Linotype, *Weekly World*, "Silver Miner's Funds," Free Silver Democratic Ticket (1894)

Photographs / Images: Bryan in his *World-Herald* office, Gilbert M Hitchcock, Richard L Metcalfe, banner headline announcing Bryan's presidential nomination, five-column Bryan photo



*William Jennings Bryan, apparently in his office at the World-Herald.*

# WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN WORLD-HERALD EDITOR

By PAUL V. PETERSON

**A**MONG the many credits following the name of William Jennings Bryan is that of "editor of the *Omaha World-Herald*, 1894-1896." And indeed his name did appear on the masthead of this Nebraska newspaper from September of 1894 until he was selected to carry the standard of the Democratic Party in the summer of 1896. In fact, however, Bryan did little editing, and had the success of the Omaha paper depended upon his presence and direction as an editor, it is very likely that the newspaper would have ceased publication.

How was it that Bryan came to be editor of the *World-Herald*? Why did he choose to give up his seat in the House of Representatives in 1894 by not seeking reelection to what would have been a third term? What did Bryan expect to gain by a switch from politics to newspapering? And why did Gilbert M. Hitchcock, the apparently successful

*Dr. Peterson is an Associate Professor of Journalism at Ohio State University. Material for his article is based on his doctoral dissertation, "The Omaha Daily World and World-Herald, 1885-1964."*

publisher of the newspaper, think that the addition of Bryan's name to the staff was important to the future of the paper?

In a sense, the answers to these questions began at least in part before the questions could be asked.

By 1894 Gilbert M. Hitchcock had reached a decision which had probably been some time in the making: His newspaper needed typesetting machines. However, such machines were expensive. From the time the *Daily World* was started on August 24, 1885, Hitchcock had watched with great interest the development of automatic typesetting machines. Undoubtedly his business eye had more than once caused him to stand in the doorway to the composing room and reflect on the many compositors at work, hand setting each individual piece of type, and then after the paper had been printed, returning each piece to its individual compartment in the California type case.

As early as March of 1886, the *Daily World* had carried an article about typesetting machines, this one an interview with James E. Munson of New York about the "Baltimore machine." Munson didn't think the machine would be a success, for "the effect of having so many things to distract his [the operator's] attention must necessarily be an increased number of errors, and, therefore, of lines of type to be set and cast over again." He also said he thought the machine's greatest fault was that when "an error occurs, even a single letter in a whole line, that whole line must be reset."<sup>1</sup>

An 1891 typesetting contest sponsored by the American Newspaper Publishers Association in Chicago was front page news in the *World-Herald*.<sup>2</sup> Three machines were pitted

---

1. *Daily World* (Omaha), March 27, 1886. It was generally known among the newspaper fraternity that Ottmar Mergenthaler, working with funds provided by the *New York Tribune* and other newspapers, had nearly completed a workable typesetting machine. The Mergenthaler machine set its first line of type in July of 1886, although the machines were not generally available until the early 1890's.

2. *Omaha World-Herald*, October 13, 1891. The *World-Herald* dates from July 15, 1889, when Hitchcock purchased the *Omaha Daily Herald* from John A. McShane. The *Herald* had been founded in 1865 by Dr. George L. Miller.

against one another—the Mergenthaler Linotype, the Rogers Typograph, and the McMillan typesetting machine. After a four-day battle, the Typograph was declared the winner, the Linotype coming in second.

Thus, by early 1894 Hitchcock was convinced that his newspaper must have typesetting machines, and he placed an order for ten Linotypes at a total cost of thirty thousand dollars. Delivery was slated for early September of that same year, but payment was to start as soon as the order was placed. More money was needed immediately if the paper was to meet its latest financial obligation.

In April of that year, William Jennings Bryan, in his second term as Nebraska's Second District congressman, wrote a long letter to Hitchcock proposing that he, Bryan, not seek a third term.<sup>3</sup>

I have been thinking over a matter, and I would like to present it to you in the strictest confidence for your consideration. . . . it looks as if there might be a republican tidal wave in 1894 similar to the democratic wave of 1890. The action of the President on the money question and the action of some eastern democrats on the tariff question will give our opponents a decided advantage aided by the hard times for which our party is only partly responsible. I have been considering the advisability of refusing to run for Congress. If it was the mere matter of being beaten I would not care particularly, but if I am a candidate I shall be confined to the district, and hence unable to assist in the campaign in the rest of the state.

If I am foot-loose I can help make combination and go where I can do most good; whereas if I stay in my district and then lost I will have more than wasted my opportunities. There is this possibility also, that I might help to elect a legislature anti-republican and stand some chance for senator . . . .

---

3. Bryan to Hitchcock, April 14, 1894. This exchange of letters between Bryan and Hitchcock is quoted at some length because the existence of these papers has generally been ignored by Bryan scholars. They not only fully explain the circumstances under which Bryan became editor of the *World-Herald*, but they add another facet to his personality. Robert Patterson in his 1940 dissertation on Hitchcock also explored these papers. The letters are now in the possession of Mrs. Denman Kountze of Omaha, a sister of the second Mrs. Hitchcock. She received the papers as a part of the estate when her sister died in 1964. They were recently microfilmed with funds provided by the Hitchcock Foundation, and it is anticipated that copies will be distributed to certain libraries and historical societies.

But his not seeking reelection was not the primary purpose of this letter, for he went on to say:

I have for more than a year had in mind a plan for utilizing the acquaintance I have been making throughout the west. My tariff and silver speeches have given me a wide acquaintance throughout the west, and the belief has grown upon me that I might utilize this notoriety both for the benefit of the cause and also pecuniarily. I had thought of starting a weekly paper and trying to get a large circulation through the western states, but that would involve me in considerable expense and would compel me to assume the responsibility for its business management, and that I would not have time for. I was negotiating with a party when it occurred to me that you and I might make a deal mutually advantageous. Your weekly is already established and there is an economy in running it in connection with your daily. Could you arrange to give me the political management of the weekly; my work to cover two or three columns in each issue, you to pay me for the same a certain amount for each new subscriber obtained under my management? I could find time to write that much each week. As I understand it, the advertising brings in as much money as the subscriptions, and the price of advertising depends upon the circulation. Your weekly is furnished, I believe, at a dollar a year, and when you have once gained a subscriber you count upon keeping him. I do not know what your circulation is now, but suppose it is in the neighborhood of 10,000. I have been calculating that if I took hold of the matter in May or June and pushed the work vigorously I ought to be able to make a large increase in the circulation, and extend it from Texas to Montana; making the fight for silver and tariff reform, and supporting the best man who had a chance of winning whether he be populist or democrat.

That Bryan was merely seeking an outlet for his ideas was disproved in the next statement:

Now I may miss my calculation, but I believe that I could be able to exert a considerable influence in the way of uniting these kindred forces against the common enemy—The Republican party. I believe that this could be accomplished at pecuniary profit to both you and myself. My idea would be to build up such a circulation as the *Atlanta Constitution* and *Louisville Courier Journal* have. The field in the west is open because there is really no paper filling that place. The political course of the weekly could be entirely independent of the daily. I would not want to have anything to do with the daily because it would take too much time, but I have no doubt of being able to supply two or three columns weekly. Now, if after reading this you think the plan is impracticable [*sic*], telegraph me that much in substance. If you think it is worth while to consider the matter farther, telegraph me that you

will write me about the plan which I will understand to mean that there is a possibility of our coming to an agreement.

This proposal did not come as a great shock to Hitchcock. Richard L. Metcalfe, the *World-Herald's* Washington correspondent and one of Bryan's foremost admirers, had discussed the idea earlier with him. Both apparently had felt the Bryan "magic" would be good for the paper, but perhaps for different reasons. Metcalfe undoubtedly looked forward to sparkling editorials in the grand manner of Bryan, while Hitchcock considered the possibility that Bryan might bring with him the source of revenue, that was so badly needed to meet those Linotype payments. In addition, the *World-Herald* had been one of Bryan's most ardent supporters during his 1890 and 1892 campaigns, and almost daily Metcalfe was filing glowing reports of the doings of WJB, which were fully reported in the newspaper's pages.

In reply to Bryan's letter, Hitchcock wrote:

Instead of writing you I have commissioned Metcalfe to talk with you. . . .

In talking the matter over with him since your letter came I have absorbed some of his enthusiasm over the scheme and have given him the substance of what I could be willing to do.

I am disposed to think the opportunity is a good one for the *World-Herald*, for you and for western democracy.

Hitchcock had suggested to Metcalfe that it would be better if Bryan were affiliated with the daily, since it offered a wider circulation at the moment. And the *Weekly World* was looked upon by Hitchcock as somewhat of a necessary newspaper evil. His competition had weekly editions, and so must he. Metcalfe, however, found Bryan more interested in the weekly edition. After discussion with Bryan, Metcalfe wrote to Hitchcock:

I have delayed writing you, for the reason that nothing absolutely definite has been determined. I have had an interesting experience in this matter, I anticipated some trouble but did not think it would be necessary to work so hard to inject a little sense into some of the great men in our vicinity. I found our friend strongly prejudiced in favor of

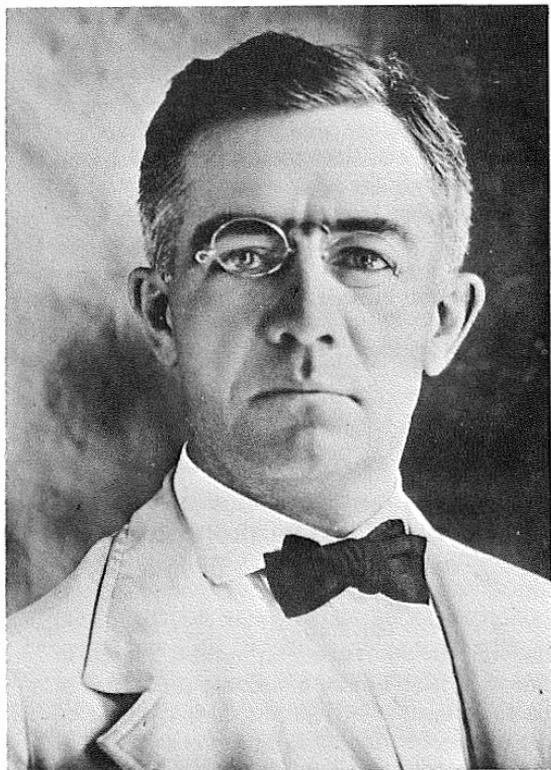
his ridiculous "weekly" scheme, it required several joint debates to induce him to open his eyes. His opinions have however, undergone a marked change, and when I parted with him at a late hour last night, he really displayed an enthusiasm that in itself was to me considerable reward. . . . His plan is not well defined but he is already in communication with Denver parties as well as with a very wealthy friend in New York.<sup>4</sup>

Metcalfé had also approached Bryan with a suggestion from Hitchcock that Bryan and his friends take out shares of stock in the paper. Hitchcock had suggested twenty-five thousand dollars worth. To this, Bryan replied that it might be easier for him to obtain a loan from Democratic friends. Metcalfe explained, saying:

One reason for this is that he will have some hesitancy in asking his best friends to subscribe outright but this feeling would not prevent

---

4. Metcalfe to Hitchcock, April 27, 1894.



*Gilbert M. Hitchcock,  
founder and publisher  
of the World-Herald.*

him from soliciting the loan. I have said to him that this threw a new light on the scene, with which I was not prepared to deal. I felt however, that other things, already accomplished and yet to be accomplished, as the result of my work here, will make it possible for the loan feature to be agreeable to you. I am not leaving for the West disappointed. I am going however, considerably wiser than when I came here. It has been very slow work considering its value to the party most deeply interested at this end of the line. . . .

Two weeks later Bryan wrote to Metcalfe, who was then in Omaha, answering a telegram from him which had asked what his latest thoughts were on the proposal to take editorial charge of the *World-Herald*. Bryan wrote:

In regard to the paper, I have talked with my wife and while she is quite enthusiastic over the probable success of the venture, she advises against taking more than one thousand dollars proposed. I have been married about ten years and have not saved more than five thousand, and she objects to my risking it in any venture. I feel, as I wrote you, unwilling to solicit among my friends for stock. Friends have done a great deal for me and I have had better opportunity to return their kindness and I am not willing to urge them into business investments on my account. I had hoped to find loans but if they are out of the question we might as well give up the daily paper scheme if H. insists on stock being taken. I am willing to try the weekly if H. desires it or I am willing to write signed editorials at so much per column, H. to retain editorial control. . . . Talk with H. and have him make a proposition. If he takes to the signed editorials how much will be give [*sic*] per column? He can advertise me as on the editorial staff just the same as if I was in control, and at the same time to direct the course of the paper by his own editorials.

P. S. Please mail me at once your largest and best "cut" of myself.<sup>5</sup>

In his initial letter of April 14, Bryan had said that he could commence on the paper May 1 or 15, and since he eventually did intend to return to the law, that would give him nearly a year because "my present term does not expire until next March." He apparently did not see himself as a permanent newspaperman.

The next letter was from Bryan to Hitchcock, written on May 26, 1894. It discussed in some detail the circumstances

---

5. Bryan to Metcalfe, May 13, 1894.

under which Hitchcock had proposed that Bryan become editor and reviewed Bryan's thinking on the matter:

I believe I have not written to you since Metcalfe and I have been discussing the paper project. He has asked me to make a proposition to you. When I first wrote, I only thought of the weekly. My reason for suggesting the matter was two-fold. In the first place, I thought it would enable me to reach a large number of people through the acquaintance I have formed and thus exert an influence in favor of the legislation in which I feel interested. In the second place, I thought it would be a matter of pecuniary profit if I made the enterprise a success. The expenses here are such that my salary does not enable me to save much and I thought it a legitimate way to increase my exchequer.<sup>6</sup>

Bryan's mind, originally preferring the weekly edition to the daily, had definitely begun to change. But now the question was, where would the necessary money be raised for the venture, since Hitchcock was apparently making the editorship available on the condition that cash be raised for a stock purchase. Bryan continued:

Metcalfe came down with the proposition for the daily also, and the value of it grew upon me as I considered it. I have no doubt that a daily would enable me to reach a great many more people and exert a wider influence. I think too that your proposition for the taking of \$25,000 worth of stock was a reasonable one. I made some inquiries and found that I could not raise the money among outsiders either as a business proposition or in behalf of the silver cause. I do not see any way of raising the money except to go around among friends and urge them to take stock on the strength of my promise to run the paper. Since I have been in Nebraska I have been the recipient of favors from a great many people and have not been in a position to make much of a return and I do not feel like going to people and asking them to make a pecuniary investment in my ability to run a paper. I told Metcalfe that I would subscribe for \$1,000 myself to be paid for in installments of \$100.00 a month. That I am still willing to do. I shrink, however, from soliciting and where your proposition is just and equitable, yet it is one which I cannot comply with, and I presume that there is no use in discussing it further. I have not felt like considering it from the standpoint of my political advantage, for you have too much invested in it to risk my management unless you are satisfied that it will be a pecuniary advantage to you.

The letter also proposed an alternate plan, a new concept of his labors on the paper. Under this idea, Bryan would

---

6. Bryan to Hitchcock, May 26, 1894.

merely pen signed editorials for the paper, and hence would not have to invest in the venture.

Another plan has occurred to me in case you decide that the taking of stock is a condition precedent to the control of the paper's political policy. One of the Metropolitan papers has spoken to me about writing signed editorials on various live subjects, and I am considering it. It has occurred to me that we might find this a middle ground between my first proposition for controlling the weekly and your proposition for controlling the daily also. This plan would have the advantage of making your paper a medium through which you speak to a large number of people and you might be able to make it a means of extending your circulation. If the compensation is made dependent upon the amount I write (you can fix a maximum per day if you like) you will only pay for what is done and the arrangement can be terminated by either one at will. This leaves the control and direction entirely to you. You can dissent from an answer or endorse any thing I say. This plan it seems to me has some advantages over either of the others. If we enter into it I do not want to be bound to write a particular amount, but will try to prepare the average amount which you desire except where necessarily prevented, and as I alone would be responsible for what I say I would want freedom to discuss any question in any way. If this strikes you [as] favorable let me know how much such services would be worth and about how much you would expect daily, and I will telegraph you my answer, if terms are agreeable. You can advertise me as one of the editorial staff and say that my contributions will all be signed.

It was to this letter that Hitchcock penned his Decoration Day "ruminations" on May 30, 1894. It was one thing to write signed editorials, he said, but another to exert a proprietary interest. He said:

Your various schemes to write for the daily or edit the weekly do not strike me as desirable or profitable for either of us. Neither do they suggest any degree of success politically.

Metcalf's plan was a big one. It appealed to me because I could see in it a possible boom for the paper, a large advertisement and a political revolution. It struck me too that it opened a new field of distinction for you.

But it is one thing to become editor of a prominent paper like the *World-Herald* and quite another thing merely to write contributions for it. . . .

The long and short of it is that to become editor of the *World-Herald* means something for both of us. To become a contributor means little for either of us.

And of course the *World-Herald* needed money. If Bryan did not take stock in the corporation, Hitchcock would have to look elsewhere. He really didn't want or need an editor who came without money.

This letter apparently convinced Bryan that if he really wanted to have use of the *World-Herald* to spread his ideas, he would have to take more than a passing interest in the venture. In a letter to Hitchcock two weeks later, Bryan wrote:

Your letter was duly received and I am convinced to the utmost that I will try to raise the amount of stock desired. It will put it at 15,000 and if we fail in that but reach 10,000 we will start in. Let Met try to raise 5,000 among the silver men in Omaha and I will try to raise 10,000 outside. I have written to Tom Allen to see if 5,000 can be raised in Lincoln. . . .

If we make the arrangements necessary how would it do to make the announcement on the 4th of July? Met's arguments got me to a point where yours could finish the work. My hesitance was due to my disinclination to ask my friends to subscribe but I'll make the effort. Will keep the matter quiet until we are ready.<sup>7</sup>

Hitchcock immediately wrote back that he was glad Bryan was "ready to enter upon the scheme."

I think it will prove a success for both of us. If it succeeds for one it must for both and if by any chance it should not prove good for one of us it cannot possibly for the other. July 4th would be an appropriate time. . . . Met is of the opinion that the first announcement might be made with good effect by you in Washington, so as to attract greater national attention.<sup>8</sup>

Judging from a letter written to Metcalfe on June 30, 1894, Bryan got right to work raising funds, or at least he began making the attempt. His report indicated that G. A. Luikart, a banker from Tilden, and Tom Allen, assistant postmaster in Lincoln, were busy getting pledges. Another of his old time friends, W. H. Thompson of Grand Island, was also seeking funds. Bryan cautioned Metcalfe not to "attack

---

7. Bryan to Hitchcock, June 10, 1894.

8. Hitchcock to Bryan, June 15, 1894.

our friends” in the editorials Metcalfe was writing at the time. He also suggested that he should “not interfere too emphatically in regard to state Populist candidates. We want the ones nominated to be our friends.”

A week later Hitchcock wrote again to Bryan, spelling out in detail the compensation Bryan was to receive for his work on the *World-Herald*:

Your salary to be paid monthly on the 10th of each month for previous month. The amount to be ascertained by multiplying the actual average circulation of the *Daily* and *Sunday World-Herald* for said month by ten cents which would give the yearly rate and dividing by 12 to get the monthly rate. In this circulation would not of course be included any extraordinary sales of papers in bulk to campaign committees or advertisers, nor sample copies, but only regular circulation including extra street sales.

The actual average for June was 19,020 per day. That would have made your pay for June one twelfth of \$1902—or \$158.50<sup>9</sup>

Hitchcock also proposed that some arrangement could be worked out whereby Bryan would be compensated for an increase in the weekly receipts, suggesting that “if this strikes you favorably you might draw up a memorandum covering these points which we can both sign in case your associates succeed in getting their subscriptions according to plans.”

Bryan’s associates were indeed having a hard time raising money for stock purchase. The amount originally talked of by Hitchcock was twenty-five thousand dollars. Later, this figure was reduced to fifteen thousand dollars, and in a letter to Metcalfe from Luikart, the latter said:

I find it impossible to raise more than \$11,000 to \$11,500 . . . including Bryan, Allen . . . and all fields that I have gone over, if you cannot arrange for balance I think it a failure . . .

Perhaps Mr. Hitchcock would be willing to start in and let us raise balance this Fall just before the election.<sup>10</sup>

Hitchcock, in a reply to the above, stated he would be willing to “allow three months time to raise the last \$4,000

9. Hitchcock to Bryan, July 7, 1894.

10. G. A. Luikart to Metcalfe, July 10, 1894.

necessary to make the full \$15,000 as I appreciate the difficulties. . . .” And in a long letter on July 17, Bryan began talking about a ten thousand dollar figure. His canvassers were meeting with little success.

Bryan had hoped to get two thousand dollars or more from the “friends of silver” in Colorado, but this fell through completely. The fact that he was looking for money in Colorado and the West, however, did give rise to a myth, that of the “Silver Miner’s Funds.” Supposedly, two prominent miners from Montana had chipped in some twenty thousand dollars to subsidize the *World-Herald*, on the sole condition that William Jennings Bryan become the paper’s editor.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly, Hitchcock would have liked very much to have such a myth a reality.

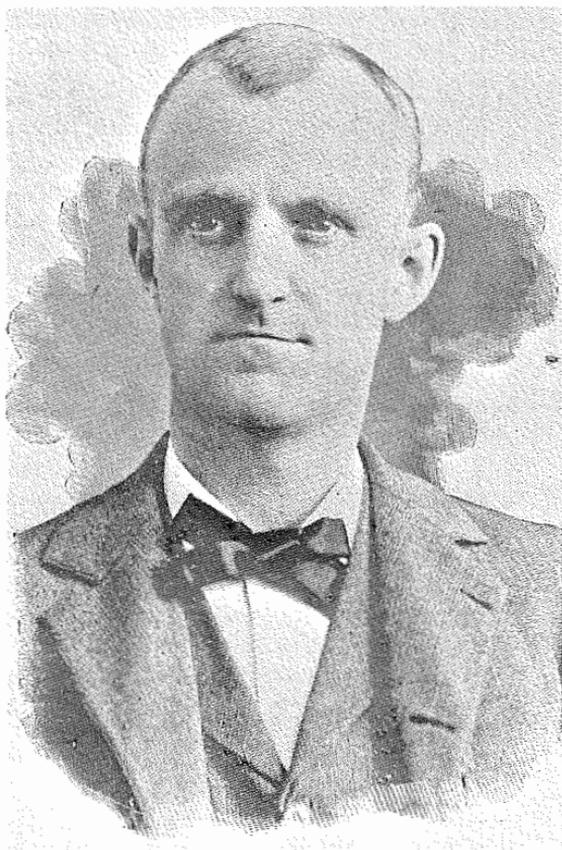
An agreement was finally signed between Hitchcock and Bryan on July 28. In part it read: “W. J. Bryan has been employed by the World Publishing Company of Omaha for one year beginning . . . . . 1894 as editor so far as the political policy of the paper is concerned, he shall furnish as much as two columns per week and more if he desires. . . .”<sup>12</sup> Terms of payment indicated that Bryan would receive ten cents per new subscriber of the *World-Herald*, and also ten percent of the net cash gain of the weekly edition. In addition, Bryan was not required to remain in the office “except when convenient.”

During the next month a number of letters were exchanged between Hitchcock and Bryan, mainly concerning the hard time Bryan was having in raising the fifteen thousand dollars Hitchcock wanted. When it became clear to Hitchcock that the full amount could not be immediately raised, he agreed to accept the eleven thousand dollars that

---

11. This myth grew from charges that appeared in the *Omaha Bee* during the campaign of 1896, when editor Edward Rosewater charged that Bryan’s post as editor had been bought by William A. Clark and Marcus Daly of Montana. The charge was repeated so often that it became a “fact” and was reported in Paxton Hibben’s *The Peerless Leader, William Jennings Bryan*. Stock certificates now held in the office of the president of the *Omaha World-Herald* indicate that no stock was ever sold to anyone outside the state of Nebraska.

12. Hitchcock to Bryan, July 7, 1894. The contract that was finally signed is dated July 28, 1894.



*Richard L. Metcalfe,  
Bryan's editorial  
ghost writer.*

supposedly had been pledged, with the remaining four thousand dollars to come later. With that hurdle accepted by both parties, all was in readiness for the announcement. On August 28 the *World-Herald* carried a "special announcement" signed by Hitchcock. It said:

With the issue of September first Hon. W. J. Bryan will become editor-in-chief of the *World-Herald*. In making this announcement it is proper to say that the general character of the *World-Herald* as a newspaper will be maintained. Its editorial policy, however, will be marked out by Mr. Bryan from time to time along the line of his well-known political convictions.

Except for the addition of Mr. Bryan to its head the staff of the *World-Herald* in both editorial and news departments, will remain as heretofore organized and the general management of the paper will continue in my hands.

Finally, after more than four months of letters and discussions, Bryan took the helm of the *World-Herald*. As expected, the press of the city and state offered immediate editorial comment, often divided along political lines. The *Omaha Bee* took the occasion to slap at Hitchcock, saying in its August 29 edition that the addition of Bryan would "elevate" the newspaper's general character. "The *World-Herald*" it said, "has long been in greater need of a man of ability as its head than Mr. Bryan has been in need of a newspaper at his command." The editorial continued:

We fear that the advent of Mr. Bryan into editorial journalism is so far as his expectations are concerned, intended to mark the beginning of only a temporary and not a permanent career. His new place is to be used merely as a stepping stone in the furtherance of higher political aspirations, and if the attempt proves successful another publisher's announcement may be awaited in a few months informing the public of the exit of Mr. Bryan from the journalistic stage. On this point it may not be out of place to call attention to the fact that few editors have been promoted directly to high elective office. An editor who really speaks his convictions freely on all subjects cannot hope to avoid coming in conflict with the opinions of the people on many points; an editor who sacrifices his convictions to every popular clamor plays the role of the demagogue, and like him, soon loses the confidence of the public. It is by far easier for the editor to promote the election of another to office than to secure an elective office for himself. If, therefore, Mr. Bryan enters journalism as a side-play in his senatorial game it is quite possible that he may be grievously disappointed.

Bryan announced his editorship in a signed editorial printed on September 1. It read:

In assuming editorial control of the *World-Herald* I enter a new and, for me, untried field, and fully realize the disadvantages under which I will labor until I become accustomed to the work. The importance of the newspaper is fully appreciated. If "the pen is mightier than the sword" it is also true that the pencil is rapidly becoming mightier than both. Jefferson, whose genius seemed sufficient to measure all influences and to set in just proportion all the forces of society, once said, in a letter written from France:

"Were it left for me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government I should not hesitate to prefer the latter."

The newspaper is one of the most important agencies in the formation of public opinion, and its influence for good depends upon its reputation for truth, honesty and courage.

The aim of the *World-Herald* will be, first, to ascertain the truth, and then to present it fearlessly and with singleness of purpose. The paper will conserve the interests of the Missouri valley where they differ from the interest of other sections of the country, but will advocate those principles of justice and equality which are calculated to promote the welfare of all sections. It can be relied upon to stand up for the "omnivorous west" and for its right to fair play and a full share of the nation's prosperity.

The opinion of the *World-Herald* on public questions will not be left in doubt. Its position will be made so plain that he who runs may read, and its warfare will be so conducted that it will deserve the respect of its opponents.

The *Weekly World-Herald* will be made an interesting addition to the daily. It will not take the place of the country press, but will supplement its work, and, therefore, increase its usefulness. The "country weekly" has its peculiar sphere, and ought to find a place in every household, but the metropolitan weekly covers a wider field and spreads before the family an intellectual feast entirely out of proportion to the insignificant cost of its subscription. While the newspaper is striving to represent the people who read it, the influence which it can exert increases with its circulation. If it is so conducted as to meet the approval of the public it deserves hearty support.

I take my seat upon the editorial tripod with more confidence because I am to have the active and efficient assistance of Mr. Richard L. Metcalfe, whose ability as a writer is well known, and whose skill as a special correspondent is everywhere appreciated.

To brethren of the fraternity I extend greeting: "Enemies in war; in peace friends."

W. J. Bryan.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, the *World-Herald* had endorsed Bryan for U. S. senator on the 1894 Free Silver Democratic ticket.<sup>14</sup> There was little doubt but what the newspaper was expected to help elect a sufficient number of Democrats and Populists to the Nebraska State Legislature to assure Bryan's election by that body.

Just how much writing for the paper Bryan did is difficult to determine, but it is generally acknowledged that he did

---

13. *World-Herald*, September 1, 1894.

14. *Ibid.*, August 5, 1894.

little. He simply wasn't in the office much of the time. Starting on September 5, the *World-Herald* began noting "Bryan's Appointments" on its editorial page. He was delivering two and three speeches a day during the 1894 campaign. When he did write a specific piece, it was generally wordy, vague, and always heavy with scriptural references. For example, the following paragraphs appeared in a September 29 editorial:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works: show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works.

The words above quoted were directed to those who profess a faith and expect the mere profession of faith to avail without works. The lesson is as applicable in the political as in the religious world. The best representative of a principle is not the man who loudly preaches it, but the man who faithfully practices it. There is hypocrisy in the party as well as in the church. There are those who burden the air with their protestations of loyalty to party, who become self-appointed exponents of the only true doctrine, and who presume to exclude from the party those who desire to differ from the line of policy prescribed by them, and yet oftentimes the sections of these lusty shouters belie their words.<sup>15</sup>

There is no doubt but what Richard L. Metcalfe did most of the editorial writing during Bryan's stint as editor. He later admitted that he "rewrote" notes sent to him by Bryan into editorials he was certain expressed the Bryan viewpoint. Much of what passed for Bryan's work in the *World-Herald* was really Metcalfe's, but when such editorials were quoted by other newspapers, they were always tagged as being from the pen of Bryan.

Despite an all-out effort on the part of the *World-Herald*, the Republicans won control of the State Legislature in

---

15. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1894.

November of 1894, and Bryan was out. Or rather, the people of the state decided that he should continue as a "newspaperman" for at least another year or two.<sup>16</sup> Bryan of course had other ideas and continued to stump the nation advocating the free coinage of silver at the sixteen to one ratio. In fact, he was out of the office so much that on October 15, 1895, the following item appeared in the *World-Herald*:

Owing to Mr. Bryan's necessary absence from Omaha much of the time, he has at his own request, been relieved from editorial responsibility for the policy of the *Daily World-Herald* in Omaha and Douglas county local matters. He has the direction of the policy of the *Daily* and *Weekly World-Herald* on all questions of state and national importance.

This was more or less an admission publicly of what everyone had known privately—that Bryan's name had been added to the paper's staff, but his actual work was little indeed.

But with Metcalfe behind the scenes, the paper each day carried either some news item about a speech delivered by Bryan or an editorial beseeching the people to rise to the demand for the coinage of silver. Editorials implied that all sorts of bad things would happen if bimetallism was not immediately adopted.

When the Democrats gathered in Chicago in early July of 1896, the *World-Herald* had three men on the scene. Bryan was there, ostensibly as a reporter. Hitchcock was in the Windy City to play an active role in the proceedings of the convention, and Metcalfe was on hand in his important role as a member of the platform committee. Hitchcock's signed dispatches back to the paper in Omaha indicated that Bryan was "beginning to show strength," and he hopefully reported that a "Nebraskan could have an important post in the nominations of the convention." Metcalfe wrote little and Bryan wrote nothing. Persons who read the *World-Herald* read about the convention from United Press dispatches.<sup>17</sup>

---

16. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1894.

17. Not to be confused with the United Press wire service which was founded in 1907 by E. W. Scripps. This former United Press died in the late 1890's.

When Bryan was nominated for the Presidency, the *World-Herald* gave it banner treatment, a great departure from the general one or two column headlines used in front page makeup. And one day later the paper printed a five column sketch of their hero. This was the biggest illustration which had appeared in the paper since its inception in 1885.

On August 8, an editorial signed by G. M. Hitchcock informed the public that Bryan's "work as editor has been finished." The announcement said:

Two years ago I had the pleasure of announcing that W. J. Bryan had accepted the position of editor of the *World-Herald* and that thenceforth this newspaper would be dedicated to the cause of free silver coinage.

Success beyond the most sanguine expectations has been achieved. Two years have witnessed a political revolution, which culminated at Chicago in the triumph of silver and the selection of Mr. Bryan as democracy's candidate for president.

Today Mr. Bryan is on his way to New York, where he will formally accept the greatest honor and highest responsibility which can be tendered any man. This then is an appropriate time to announce that Mr. Bryan's work as editor has been finished. He will be succeeded by Mr. R. L. Metcalfe, who has been Mr. Bryan's associate and who for several years has held the laboring oar in editorial work upon the *World-Herald*.<sup>18</sup>

Bryan's departure from the staff of course did not mean the end of *World-Herald* support. The paper under Metcalfe continued to give him wholehearted support. Editorials praising Bryan appeared daily, and every appearance he made was fully reported. It was not unusual for the *World-Herald* to report complete speeches given by the candidate, something few other newspapers did. During the last several weeks of the campaign, full pages were devoted to Bryan and silver, complete with the "latest" sketch of Bryan. No more could have been asked of the paper or its staff. But the effort was not enough, and on November 4, 1896, William McKinley was sent to the White House by more than half a million votes.

18. *World-Herald*, August 8, 1896.

It would seem that Bryan's term as editor must have been rather disappointing to Hitchcock, for neither of the hoped-for results materialized. He wanted money for his newspaper, and he wanted a man in the White House who was committed to bimetallism. From the correspondence cited, there is no doubt but what Hitchcock saw Bryan as an opportunity to add financial strength to the *World-Herald*, both immediately through the purchase of stock, and in the future through the increased income that would come from greater circulation. The fact that Bryan and his friends only took ninety-six hundred dollars in stock when Hitchcock had hoped they would take fifteen thousand was a disappointment.<sup>19</sup> It meant that he had to seek additional funds elsewhere.

And circulation never expanded the way either of the men had hoped. When negotiations began in April of 1894, the *World-Herald* claimed a circulation of 18,572 per day. In July of that year it increased to 20,349, then receded to 18,789 for the following month. That was the daily circulation when Bryan became editor. In November, 18,770 copies were circulated, and for the year 1896, the newspaper averaged 20,869 copies daily.<sup>20</sup> Thus there had been some growth,

---

19. Stock certificates held in the office of the president of the *Omaha World-Herald* indicate the following amounts issued to Bryan and his friends during this period:

W. J. Bryan	10 shares	August 27, 1894
G. A. Luikart	45 shares	September 13, 1894
G. W. Hervey	5 shares	September 20, 1894
J. C. Dahlman	5 shares	October 17, 1894
W. J. Bryan	4 shares	November 20, 1894
F. S. Allen	1 share	November 20, 1894
A. L. Clark	2 shares	December 22, 1894
W. J. Bryan	5 shares	January 14, 1895
W. J. Bryan	5 shares	February 7, 1895

Each share was worth one hundred dollars par, and thus it can be noted that Bryan himself purchased twenty-four hundred dollars worth of stock. In all cases the stock was eventually repurchased by Hitchcock, although he was not able to buy the last of it until March of 1905.

20. These figures were taken from the masthead of the *World-Herald* and were not audited or verified.

# Morning World-Herald.

## WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT.

### PEOPLE SHOUT FOR JOY

chant of Bryan's Nomination for President on the Democratic Ticket the Signal for the Riot of Exultation.

Flowing on the Western Plains Hear the Glad News and Rejoice at the Success of the Candidate From Nebraska.

As Enthusiasm and Devotion of His Native State Pledge the Action of the Chicago Convention and Show the Appreciation of the Honor Filled Hour.

Spurred the Leader of the Day and the Dawn of Better Times Crowned by With the Tens of Millions and a Host of Hugs.

Feared the Defeat of Bryan After the Entrance of His Name. Bryan Was Not Expected to Be a Candidate.

He was the only one of the candidates who was not expected to be a candidate.

When the great spirit of exultation broke out in the streets of Omaha, the people were not only rejoicing at the general feeling of rejoicing but also at the fact that the candidate was from their own state.

It was a day of rejoicing and a day of triumph for the people of Nebraska.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

The people of Nebraska were not only rejoicing at the nomination of Bryan but also at the fact that he was from their own state.

### REPUBLICAN ENTIRENESS

The Republican nomination of Bryan for president has been a great triumph for the party. It has shown the strength of the party and the popularity of Bryan.

### ROUSSEAU CONGRATULATES BRYAN

Senator Charles Roush of Nebraska has congratulated Bryan on his nomination for president.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

Bryan is a member of the Democratic party and has served in the United States House of Representatives.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.



WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

### WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president, is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

A banner headline announced Bryan's Presidential nomination to World-Herald readers, followed the next day by a five-column illustration on an inside page.



but it certainly did not meet the expectations of Hitchcock. The magic of the Bryan name fell more than a little short.

The addition of Bryan to the editorial staff also cost the *World-Herald* some advertising income, although there is no documentary evidence of how much. Those persons who favored a single monetary standard switched their advertising to the *Bee*, a paper which favored their position. There were other repercussions. Some Omaha bankers who held *World-Herald* and Hitchcock notes attempted to foreclose unless the *World-Herald* changed its position with regard to silver.<sup>21</sup> The paper refused, and after a cooling-off period the notes were permitted to continue as before. With all the problems the publisher had on his mind at this time, these attempts at persuasion must not have been appreciated.

Bryan, too, must have been disappointed with his appointment as editor. It seems clear from his letters that he expected to be reimbursed considerably from the profits of the paper. Apparently he himself believed a good deal in the magic of the Bryan name. But for the thirteen months, beginning September 1, 1894, he received a total of \$1,923.53 from the *World-Herald* in amounts that ranged from a low of \$143.47 to a high of \$156.41 per month.<sup>22</sup> Of course he did have use of the free railroad passes of the paper, which must have been of considerable worth to a man stumping day and night, and he did do relatively little work for his compensation. Still, the amount received had to be far below his expectations.

All in all, the Bryan editorship must have left something to be desired on all counts, except perhaps one. During this time, Metcalfe was permitted to write extensively and influentially on behalf of his hero. When Bryan was "relieved" of his editorial chores, Metcalfe was made editor

---

21. *World-Herald*, October 27, 1929.

22. Although Bryan continued as nominal head of the paper after this period, there is no record of his receiving any additional compensation. These figures were taken from a hand-penned note by Hitchcock and currently are among certain business papers relating to the early days of the paper now held in the editor's office.

of the paper, a position he had obviously earned by any yardstick.

And so the era of William Jennings Bryan as editor of the *World-Herald* came to an end. In retrospect, it was a draw as to whether Bryan or the paper had influenced the other the most. In the years ahead, the *World-Herald* would be championing another member of the staff for political office, and this time there would be no lengthy negotiations, no attempt to get outsiders to purchase stock. The candidate would be Hitchcock himself.