

JAMES PARKS CALDWELL

Joseph C. Nate¹

The life of Founder James Parks Caldwell after the Civil War, and until his death, was spent in the far West and in Mississippi, his adopted state in the Southland. During those years he had only limited opportunity for contacts with the Fraternity, and the events of his interesting career were but little known among its members. The years since have brought to light much new material relating to him, making possible a more complete narrative of his life.

The story of James Parks Caldwell is one of distinctive interest. Gentleness and modesty of personal character, the brilliancy of a remarkably well-stored mind, and inflexible loyalty to personal convictions combined to make his a striking personality. He possessed, also, much of initiative and the spirit of adventure into new fields of opportunity. We shall follow the youth who left his Ohio home at the age of seventeen in his pilgrimage to the South before the Civil War; throughout that great conflict; and through the states of the new West thereafter, with the closing years in his beloved Mississippi. It all constitutes the revelation of a remarkable character which is forever assured of its own place among the Seven who founded Sigma Chi.

James Parks Caldwell was born at Monroe, Ohio, on [Saturday] March 27, 1841. The village was located in Butler County, some twelve miles northeast of Hamilton, in a region known for its considerable population of Shaker people. The boyhood home of Caldwell was thus near to that of Franklin Howard Scobey of the founders, at Hamilton, and only a few miles from Oxford, Ohio, the seat of Miami University. Caldwell was the son of Dr. William W. Caldwell and Isabella H. Parks Caldwell. Both parents were of Scotch-Irish extraction, the father having been born and reared at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a graduate of Dickinson College, and the mother being of a family of Warren County, Ohio, adjacent to Butler County. Several members of the preceding generations of these families had come to America in Colonial times and had fought in the Revolution. Dr. Caldwell, the father of the founder, was known for his scholarly attainments, for his skill in the profession of medicine, and for his usefulness in community interests. He was a staunch Presbyterian in religious faith and an unyielding Democrat in national politics. In the stirring political events in Ohio preceding the Civil War, he became a War-Democrat.²

¹ Joseph Cookman Nate. *The History of Sigma Chi 1855-1925*, Volume IV, pp. 1-15.

² A war-Democrat was one who separated himself from the majority of the Democratic Party and upheld the military policies of President Lincoln during the Civil War.

After practicing medicine at Monroe for seventeen years, Dr. Caldwell removed to the larger city of Hamilton, the county seat. This was in 1857, some months after the graduation of the son, James Parks, at Miami University. In a similar way Dr. William H. Scobey, the father of Founder Franklin Howard Scobey, had removed to Hamilton from Millville in the same county in 1852. There developed between the two men an enduring friendship in the activities of their common profession, in which both were destined to long and successful careers at Hamilton. The death of Dr. Caldwell took place in that city on April 17, 1892. The tributes which filled the papers of the city at the time reveal the high esteem in which he was held.



The Caldwell Home on Dayton Street, Hamilton, Ohio

The father of Founder Caldwell kept careful records of family affairs. One such record is a fine revelation of parental devotion and is of special interest as authenticating the dates and other facts relating to young Caldwell's attendance at Miami University. The entries, copied as written, cover the sophomore and junior years:

September 2nd, 1854. James Parks Caldwell, aged 13 years, 5 months, and 6 days (born March 27th, 1841) left home (for the first time) for Oxford and entered the Second Class of Miami University, September 2nd, 1854. Expenses first time [term], \$54.00.

January 18th, 1855. Parks left for Oxford. Accompanied him to Hamilton, took supper together at the Hotel, then he took stage for Oxford. Hewaskeentogettohisstudies.Abouttenofhisfellowstudents were in the stage. Expenses second time, \$50.00.

September 11th, 1855. Parks left for Oxford to

enter the Junior Class. Expenses 3d time, \$71.00.
November 9th, 1855. I went over for Parks and brought Tom C. Bell along with us the next day. Expenses, \$75.00.

The total of \$104 for a sophomore year and \$146 in the junior year will not be considered as extravagant by modern collegians. Yet, young Caldwell was living well as expenses went at Miami in 1855.

Later on, the journal tells of a visit to Monroe by Isaac M. Jordan. Dr. Caldwell took the boys to a local political rally of the Democratic faith, to which all three ardently held. At that time, the elder Caldwell had Jordan introduced for a speech. It was the first political speech to be made in public by the future congressman, and the "young fellow from Miami" made a pronounced hit. The college story is completed in the records of Dr. Caldwell by this proud entry: "Parks graduated on Friday, May 15, 1857, aged 16 years, one month, and 18 days."

The unusual advancement of the lad in his studies is apparent. When he entered Miami, at thirteen, the principal of the local academy at Monroe had frankly informed Dr. Caldwell that the boy had covered everything which could be offered in the course of study. Even so, the course included considerable Latin and something of advanced mathematics. "Parks," as he was always called at home, had made grades which were greatly to his credit; and he continued to do so throughout his years in college. When he was graduated with the class of 1857 at Miami, Bell, Cooper, Jordan, and Runkle were among his classmates, and all stood high in the records of the classroom.

When Sigma Chi was founded, at the close of the academic year 1854-55, Caldwell and Benjamin P. Runkle were roommates in the "Crystal Palace," so called, now regarded as the birthplace of the Fraternity. In his memorable address, "We Seven," delivered in 1908 and subsequently, Runkle wrote of Caldwell:

I roomed with and cared for him for more than a year. Our holidays were spent in the fields and along the streams, one of us carrying a gun, or fishing rod, but Caldwell his copy of Poe or his Shakespeare. His contributions, essays, poems, plays, and stories read in the literary hall, in the chapter meetings, and on Saturdays before the whole corps of students were the most remarkable productions that I ever heard. Few of us escaped the pointed witticisms that flowed from his pen, or ever lost the nicknames that he gave us in his dramas.

He never seemed to study as other boys. What he knew appeared to be his intuitively. He could not parse the Greek and Latin, but he wrote Latin and Greek poetry, and he was more widely versed in literature than any other student in the college.

He always said that he hoped to sup sorrow with the wooden spoon that would be his on graduation day. I do not know whether or not he secured that trophy, but he left the university with the respect and whole-hearted affection of every soul from dear old Dr. Hall down to the janitor.

Isaac M. Jordan, telling of his fellow-founders at a banquet of the Theta, Cincinnati, Alumni, December 22, 1881, said: "Caldwell—what a beautiful boy he was; fair as any girl, the most precocious intellect I have ever known." The opposition to the Seven at Miami was led by Whitelaw Reid, of DKE. After Reid returned to the United States from his ambassadorship in France, and while in the South, he sought out Caldwell, and the two renewed together the memories of their youth at Old Miami.

Following his graduation, Caldwell continued for some months at Hamilton. He began law studies in the office of Judge James Clark of that city, and meanwhile his desire developed to go to the South. The family connections of the wife of Judge Clark were in Panola County,



The Historic Gayoso Hotel at Memphis

Mississippi, and plans were readily made for Caldwell to take up teaching work there. The entry in the journal of Dr. Caldwell again tells its own story as the boy made his first long journey away from home: "J. P. C. left Hamilton, Oct. 7, 1858, for Mississippi. Reached Memphis October 16. Left Memphis for Panola, Oct. 21. God bless my dear son." The stopping-place at Memphis was the famous Gayoso Hotel. Stories of that hostelry in some of its relations in Sigma Chi history may be found in the narrative

of the original Epsilon chapter at Nashville and in the Civil War records of the Fraternity. Young Caldwell became a tutor in the family of Colonel Freeman Irby, whose plantation was near “Old Pnoanola,” in Panola County.

Tutors for the young people in the home was the custom in the Old South, and the Services of young Caldwell were soon in demand in a number of homes in the neighborhood. Included was a branch of the well-known Lamar family of Mississippi. The Palmetto Academy was established at a point a few miles west of Como, Mississippi, in order that the young people of the entire region might have the services of Caldwell as its principal: There still survive at Como and other points in Mississippi, aged folk who were the pupils in “Palmetto” of the gifted young teacher from the North. Founder Caldwell conducted this academy until his enlistment, with that of all the young men of the neighborhood, in the Confederate States Army. It is of interest that the delightful novel *Heaven Trees*, by Stark Young, Eta of Sigma Chi, University of Mississippi, ‘01, has its scenes located in the exact part of Mississippi in which Caldwell taught, and in times preceding the Civil War. The Hotel Gayoso is in the story, and also the Palmetto Academy, the latter being placed for the purpose of the narrative in the neighboring center, Holly Springs.



JAMES P. CALDWELL—CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY³

James P. Caldwell was the one Confederate soldier of the founder group of Sigma Chi. He was born and reared in Ohio, having entered Miami University from his home in the vicinity of Monroe, in Butler County. For a year following his graduation, he had studied law at Hamilton, Ohio. He then removed to Panola County, Mississippi, and became the principal of the Palmetto Academy of that county. When the war opened he warmly espoused the cause of the Confederacy.

He chose the artillery branch of the service and attained the rank of first lieutenant. In July, 1863, young Caldwell became a prisoner of war and so remained until the end. He had enlisted at the age of twenty, still a slight-built, delicate type of young fellow to whom studies,



Founder Caldwell-The Young Lieutenant

³ Joseph Cookman Nate, “Sigma Chi in the Civil War,” *The History of Sigma Chi 1855-1925*, Vol. II, 37-43.

literature, and things of refinement were dear. But before his capture, and afterward, he demonstrated that of just that type of boyhood were many of the most gallant and courageous among those who fought in the armies.

The earlier service of Founder Caldwell was in the division of Generals Loring and Gardiner. Our own records first find him in camp at Jackson, Mississippi, in the early summer of 1862. A letter of splendid historic value in Sigma Chi was written by Brother Caldwell to Benjamin P. Runkle, of date April 14, 1896. The correspondence included an exchange of reminiscences of the war and has an incident of the camp at Jackson. The occurrence, says Caldwell, was...

...connected with an attempt of mine to discover if perchance some old college friend might not be among a lot of officers waiting for exchange at Jackson. Having brought dispatches to Headquarters (which by the way, was a kindly way of granting me leave enough to furnish myself with a new uniform on my fresh promotion to the lofty position of Second Lieut.), and delivered them, I found my way to the prison front, and rode up so that my horse's forefeet rested on the sidewalk. I then shouted at a group of officers in the second story windows, "Any Ohio men up there?"—"Lots of 'em," came the reply. I then asked for one to come to the window. In response, a gentleman who announced himself as Major VanHorn (I forget of what command) came forward. I inquired for anyone who had been at Miami, and for certain regiments which I knew to have been raised in Butler County. I was rather glad to be disappointed of finding any acquaintances. The amusing feature of the interview was the reply of one of the officers to my statement, "I am from Ohio, myself,"—which was, "Those are d---d queer clothes for an Ohio man to wear." . . .

The sentry at the door—hearing me say that I was from Ohio—took on himself to order me away, and the officer of the guard refused to listen to my request for admission to the prison, but, somewhat impertinently ordered me off. I galloped to Headquarters—where I was remembered by reason of my recent errand there—and asked to speak with General Pemberton, to whom I stated the case, and went back with written authority to visit the prisoners *unaccompanied*. This I accordingly did (first getting in a supply of smoking tobacco), taking great pleasure in humiliating the hypocritical officer on guard.⁴

⁴ The original of this letter and other important Sigma Chi records of General Runkle were sent to the author after the death of General Runkle, by Mrs. Lalla M. Runkle, his widow, late of Hillsboro, Ohio.

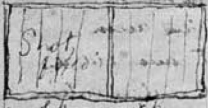
Caldwell participated with special distinction in the battles of Iuka and Corinth, Mississippi, which were fought in the fall of 1862. It may be recalled that, as the Union forces moved southward after the battle of Shiloh, these places had been evacuated by the lesser forces of Confederates holding them. It was in the fall that the Confederate army of Generals Earl Van Dorn and Sterling Price attempted the recapture of Corinth, fighting with great valor and repulsed only with great loss. Caldwell was engaged in the assault on Battery Robinette in which the repulse of his side was accomplished only with terrific slaughter, many of his comrades falling upon the very parapets they sought to gain. Battery Robinette was a key position in the outlying defenses of Corinth. Just below its guns was a ditch five feet deep, beyond which were stretches of fallen timber. Within a few hours on the morning of October 4, 1862, three desperate assaults were made by the Confederates, moving in three, or four columns about a hundred yards apart. In the final charge, the fifth of their color-bearers was shot down in front of the Battery. General Rosecrans, in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, refers to the whole assault as displaying "as good fighting on the part of the Confederates as I ever saw."⁵

We do not have the circumstances of Founder Caldwell's further military service, until we come to the siege of Port Hudson. There, the young lieutenant commanded a redan, certain parapets of the defense works, with marked bravery. This was in the early summer of 1863. Port Hudson was a small Louisiana village, situated 135 miles above New Orleans, at a sharp bend of the Mississippi. Its fortifications constituted a highly strategic point for the control of the great river. Several strong assaults were made upon the place preceding the fall of Vicksburg, but unsuccessfully. After the fall of Vicksburg, the valiant garrison of some seven thousand men surrendered on July 9, 1863, to the much larger besieging forces. The fall of Port Hudson, following that of Vicksburg, finally secured the control of the Mississippi River to the forces of the North.

In his letter of April, 1896, to Runkle, Caldwell refers with characteristic modesty to the Corinth and Port Hudson campaigns:

Not long since I had occasion to examine the volume of the "Official Records of the Confederate and Union Armies" (Gov't publication), which contains the reports, etc., concerning the defense of Port Hudson. I wanted to verify or correct some dates. To my surprise I found my name mentioned several times. This mention was only of positions and charges, and in current reports of detachment commanders to the general, for the garrison being

5 [Ed. note] Rosecrans, Major-General W. S., "Corinth," in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May 1886 to October 1886, Vol XXXII, p. 915. Available online at <http://books.google.com>. Search for "The Century Magazine".

CASH ACCOUNT. SEPTEMBER.		
Date.	Received.	Paid.
6th.		
		
(Corrected fr. page 153 to)		
<u>Ad Patriae Vexillum; Carmen Militare</u>		
<p> Ave, bis cipe, gloriae crux Nostrae nationis lucida lux Nostris amonitis luscant Quoties miles fortis In articulo mortis Salutavit te numerus II. <u>Mauris diadema</u> Spei nobis emblemata Perfulgens in bellis Aurea tibi est gloria Tuum dolum, victoria Seminata crux atq. </p>		
		(Script. Fred. Novus Oct. ANDECCLXIV)

CASH ACCOUNT. OCTOBER.		
Date.	Received.	Paid.
<p> Gloria in naven Te Republicae avem Sempternum videre; Imperatorem domantem Et mundum equitantes Omnes naves terras IV. <u>Surantibus annis</u> Te fugant tyranni Libertatis insignia Sicut custos demoritur Lar atque focorum O ultra perdisque V. <u>O Patriae decus dulces</u> Corda nobis jam supple Intacta sint ceteris Fortissime aulis omi Quibus bene fit mori Sit illis quies laeta VI. <u>Pro patria moriuntur</u> Et morte nobis tolluntur; </p>		

CASH ACCOUNT. NOVEMBER.		
Date.	Received.	Paid.
<p> Adeunt stupae memoriae Ex vitae perpendis Profectus est aulus Sempternus victoriat VII. <u>In belli fulminibus</u> In late grandinibus Fulgentem tuos cersum Harum gentis natule Sidus luce regale Pondusque etiam sursum VIII. <u>Manet quies amara</u> Tibi, via serena Pondusque etiam Imperatorem superata Est frons circumdata Sexta laudis sera IX. <u>Sanguinolentis ex undis</u> Tolo proles immortis Natis oritur nostra Altra videtur ex tunc </p>		

CASH ACCOUNT. DECEMBER.		
Date.	Received.	Paid.
<p> Glans ut Lucifer mare Per luminis claustra X. <u>Cito die cedat nox</u> Et sit dira tubae vox Gaudis obscurata Et laetis carminibus Dilectis virginibus Fortissimum laus modulata XI. <u>Sanguinis campum aut vos</u> Superstitione floreat flos Recens osculo moris Virida memoria fortis Umbra nec obita motis Haec tot mentis in ore XII. <u>Aris libertatis impone</u> Vexillum serarum coronae Superbe illis pendeat Domes vocat bellum trux Tuum stellata nostra crux Fulgore novo splendat </p>		

AD PATRIAE VEXILLUM: CARMEN MILITARE

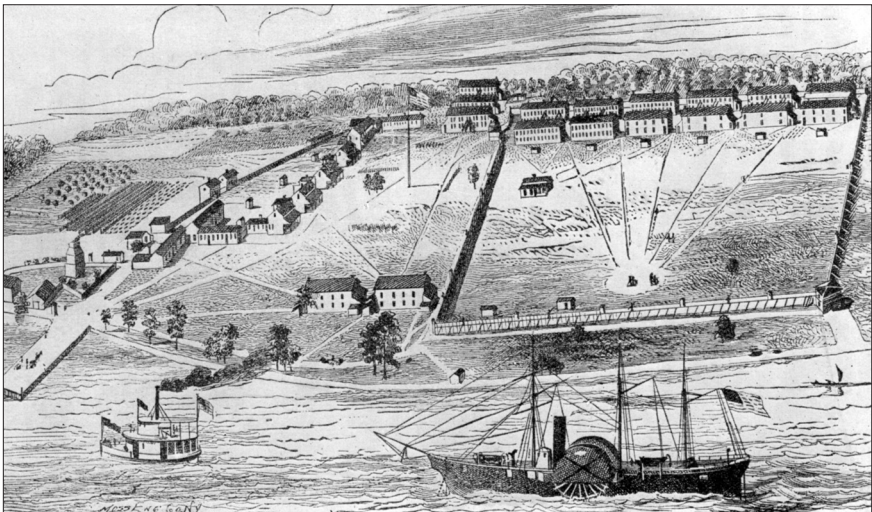
Ode to the Battle Flag of the Confederacy from Caldwell's diary.

surrendered there were no such reports of operations as would otherwise have been made. But this discovery put me on inquiry, and I sent to a friend for certain other volumes. Since I last wrote you I have found credible evidence of creditable service to which I am proud to call attention though for all these years I had been ignorant of its existence.

In Part I of Vol. XVII—I forgot to note the page but my name in the index will furnish it—I find that General Bowen in his report of the Corinth campaign has done me the honor to class me among those “conspicuous for coolness and courage during the action and on the retreat.” His brigade [including Caldwell’s regiment] covered the rear of a beaten and broken army and preserved its own discipline and morale intact, even halting to engage no less formidable an adversary than General [James B.] McPherson’s division which led the pursuit. The major-general’s commission which Bowen won that day dated from that engagement with his old friend and classmate. . . .

I, of course, knew what kind of a military record I had--every man does but felt some reluctance to assure you of my own merit, without support of more disinterested writers. Now, I am satisfied.

After the surrender of Port Hudson, Brother Caldwell was among the prisoners transferred to Johnson’s Island, Ohio. During the war, this island was the center of no small interest, both in the North and in the South. It is a part of the Ohio shore line of Lake Erie and lies three miles out from the city of Sandusky, in the land-locked bay. A mile long and a half-mile in



Johnson's Island, Sandusky Bay, Ohio

width, it comprises about three hundred acres, rising in the center to a height of fifty feet above the water's edge. It was a principal place of confinement for prisoners of war, especially the captured officers of the Confederate Army. At times, as many as three thousand prisoners were there, and the total during the entire war was upward of fifteen thousand men. The prisoners, largely officers, were usually allowed such privileges as were consistent with military discipline. Naturally, there were sometimes alarming rumors in the North, such as of plans of Confederate sympathizers in Canada to seize the island. One actual plot, of September, 1864, had as its objective the capture of the lake steamer "Philo Parsons," and of the United States war vessel "Michigan," stationed at the island, and the release of the prisoners. The daring plan was thwarted at its inception, but aroused tremendous excitement among the lake cities. A characteristic achievement of Founder Caldwell during his imprisonment was the writing of an ode to the Battle Flag of the Confederacy, in twelve stanzas of excellent Latin verse.⁶

While Caldwell was a prisoner on Johnson's Island, his old Miami classmate, Runkle, was upon the military staff of Governor Tod of Ohio. Runkle took measures to secure the freedom of Caldwell with the expectation that the latter would accept a release upon the required condition of taking the oath of allegiance to the Union. Runkle's plans met with success, and the Fraternity tradition has been to the effect that Caldwell was informed of the effort and spurned the proposal. As to this, however, our Ritual record as to Brother Caldwell is more exact in simply saying that, "While a prisoner of war, he was offered his freedom on condition that he renounce his allegiance to the Southern Confederacy, but fidelity to principle caused him to remain true to the Southland." The correspondence of Founder Caldwell with Runkle, of 1896, shows that the former was unaware while a prisoner that the opportunity of freedom was one promoted by Runkle. The father of Caldwell had originally sought for him a prison parole, to be secured by sufficient bond and sureties. "This," says Caldwell, "was refused, and the oath of allegiance suggested instead."

But I knew from sorrowful observation that I had only to take that oath and make a contemptible deserter of myself in order to obtain a release. When my father came to Johnson's Island, hoping to be allowed to see me, and asking for such an interview (in the

⁶ The poem is dated as of December, 1863. The production is remarkable in that Brother Caldwell was without access to his Latin books or literary helps of any kind. For the original copy of this poem see page 48, now a part of the historical archives of the Fraternity, we are indebted to Past Grand Consul Charles Alling, Jr., Chi '85 and Theta Theta '88, of Chicago, Illinois. It was given to him, together with other items of historical value relating to Founder Caldwell, by Miss Isabella Fox Caldwell, the sister of James Parks Caldwell, who, with his other surviving near relatives, has long resided at Los Angeles, California. See Vol. IV of this History, the James Parks Caldwell Memorial Volume, and biographical sketch of Brother Caldwell therein, for facsimile cut of poem and further statement.

presence of some officers), he was asked whether he would advise me to take the oath of allegiance. His answer, entirely respectful and in no way to be construed as disloyal, was unsatisfactory. But on account of his high standing as a Mason, he was allowed the privilege of looking at me through a field glass at the distance of three or four hundred yards. Now, these prison incidents are all that I would wish to forget of my war experience, though there were fitful gleams of light illumining even this darkness. I would write nothing with tendency—much less purpose—of keeping alive that sectional bitterness which so long held sway. It has disappeared from the hearts of belligerents, at least.

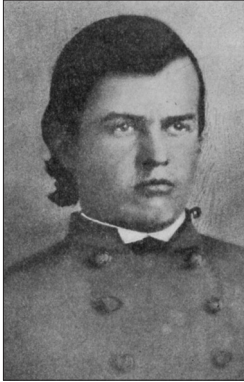
And to Caldwell, founder with the loyal, forgiving heart, the sons of Sigma Chi, North and South, will ever echo back his sentiment of unity and peace.⁷



The remarkable experiences of Caldwell as a Confederate soldier have been related in a former volume of this History. It is a record of courageous service on the part of the young soldier and lieutenant, worthy of study by every American. His own references to it in the later years were ever modest and reserved, as in the extended letter of April, 1896, to General Benjamin P. Runkle, his fellow-founder of Sigma Chi: "I, of course, knew what kind of a military record I had—every man does—but felt some reluctance to assure you of my own merits, without support of more disinterested writers." The reference is to the United States government publications of military operations in the Civil War, which had then recently come to Caldwell's attention. It is now known that Caldwell, as well as Runkle, fought in the historic battle of Shiloh, or Pittsburg Landing. A letter of Caldwell to his home also refers to another of the group of young men with whom he enlisted in Mississippi as "a member of our college fraternity."

The period of Caldwell's military imprisonment on Johnson's Island, Lake Erie, extended from October, 1863, following the surrender

⁷ At the Semi-Centennial Celebration of Sigma Chi at Oxford, Ohio, on June 28, 1905, the four surviving founders, including Caldwell, were presented with medals commemorative of the occasion. The presentation was made in a most fitting, and somewhat informal, manner by Charles Alling, Jr., then former Grand Tribune of the Fraternity and long the editor of its magazine. Addressing Founder Caldwell, the speaker said: "We honor you—for refusing to sacrifice your principles by taking the oath of allegiance, and thus securing your release from prison on Johnson's Island, even if Ben Runkle did secure the chance for you, etc." The response of Brother Caldwell informally acknowledged the tribute thus paid, which, however, did not state that he was aware while imprisoned of Runkle's part in his opportunity for freedom. Cf. Vol. V, chap. xvii, "The Semi-Centennial Grand Chapter," ad loc. [Ed. note: Volume V is not yet published.]



*Caldwell in the winter of
1862-1863*

of Port Hudson, Louisiana, until nearly the close of the war; and the efforts of Runkle, then a colonel in the federal service, to secure Caldwell's parole have been related. Since the war story was published, the diaries kept by Caldwell throughout that conflict have been made available for these historical studies. The little books give an amazing insight into the genius and character of the man—of the wide range of his reading, constantly maintained, his philosophical turn of mind, and his undying devotion to the cause of the South. New light is thrown by the diaries upon the writing of the ode to the Battle Flag of the Confederacy, in Latin verse, and while a prisoner on Johnson's Island. From the fact that the poem

as first known was written complete upon old-style sheets of paper, it was thought to have been originally prepared in that form, and perhaps largely as a single effort. Actually, a few stanzas were carefully studied out and written into the diary for the day, and at the conclusion of the work the whole was revised and copied upon pages at the end of the little volume.

Many incidents of war time and prison life are revealed in the diaries. They also contain numerous references to Sigma Chi, with names and addresses of members, North and South. Letters received and written are indicated only by initials, and some of these indicate the names of members of the Fraternity. Included are the initials "B. P. R."—Runkle. A surmise of the war story of Sigma Chi was that Patrick S. Myers, Eta '63, captured at the battle of Missionary Ridge and made a prisoner at Johnson's Island, may there have found Caldwell. This is confirmed by the diary. The records show that after the fall of Port Hudson on July 8, 1863, Caldwell was among prisoners who were held at New Orleans throughout that summer; left that city by boat for New York City on October 4; and reached Johnson's Island by way of Columbus, Ohio, on October 13, 1863. Caldwell, with a considerable number of other prisoners, was taken from Johnson's Island on March 21, 1865, and all were conveyed through Ohio and West Virginia and by way of Baltimore to Fort McHenry, Maryland. In April they were transferred to Fortress Monroe, and they were in other military strongholds on the Atlantic Seaboard before their final discharge on June 13, 1865. The journey home to Hamilton was by way of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Crestline, Ohio, and the last entry of the war story is "Take Broadgauge for Dayton (ΣX), and Hamilton before sunset—Finis."

Of equal interest with the diaries are the many letters which Caldwell wrote throughout the war to members of his home circle—a practice which he faithfully maintained throughout his life. The devotion

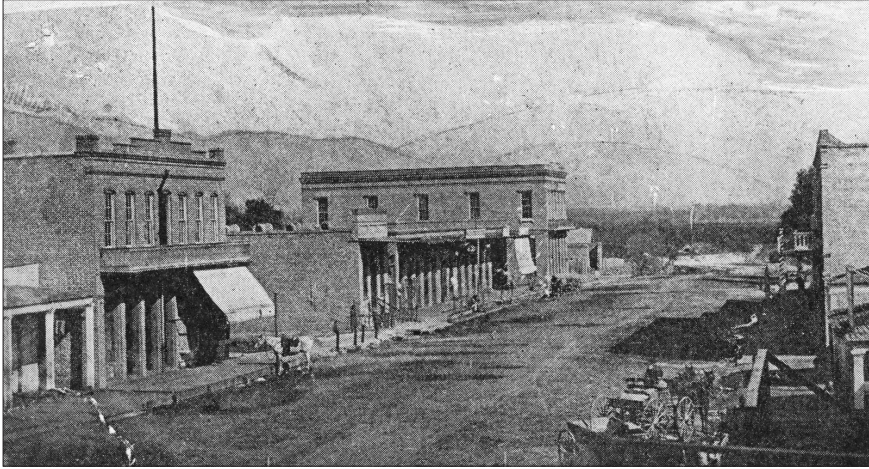
breathed in them is beautiful, and the letters exchanged between the father and the son reflect strikingly the conditions of the eventful times in which they were written. After only a few weeks at Hamilton, Caldwell returned to his beloved former surroundings in Mississippi. The people with homes depressed by misfortune and losses of their soldier dead, bravely renewed the local educational endeavor, and Caldwell was principal of Palmetto Academy again during the year 1865-66.

In 1866 he was admitted to the Mississippi bar. Professional beginnings, however, seemed impossible in those years in the South; and, having no family ties, the young lawyer decided to travel about to find a more favorable opening. For a while he investigated opportunities in other states of the South, engaging in journalistic work alternating with legal practice. In the years first following the Civil War he was licensed to practice law in both Tennessee and Texas. The lure of California, which had called the family of Harry St. John Dixon of Mississippi, founder of Constantine chapter, to the Pacific Coast, also led Caldwell thither. For several years he practiced law and engaged in journalistic and literary work first in San Bernardino, and later in Los Angeles. In the early seventies he became a regular contributor to Bret Harte's *Overland Monthly*,⁸ and some of his contributions attracted wide attention.

The wanderlust, however, was not yet satisfied; and there were a few years prior to 1875 when we find Caldwell again in his native state, and the editor of papers in towns near his old home at Hamilton—and Miami. Again, about 1875, he returned to Mississippi, and that state was his home during most of the remaining period of his life. He was engaged in editorial labors at Jackson, Mississippi, in conjunction with an old friend of Confederate Army days; and during the first administration of President Grover Cleveland, 1884-88, he was again in the West, in Wyoming and elsewhere, under governmental appointment to special service relating to the Public Domain. In 1888, he returned to Mississippi, and engaged in the practice of law at Mississippi City, Gulf port, and Biloxi throughout his remaining years. For several years following March 4, 1903, he was referee in bankruptcy for the Southern District of Mississippi.

In 1888 Mississippi City was the county seat of Harrison County, and subsequently Gulfport became the official center. While at the former place, Founder Caldwell made a study and record of the land titles of the South Mississippi country. This work gained for him general recognition in legal circles of the state as an authority upon those titles. This was due

8 [N.B. At least three of Caldwell's articles can be found in the online collection of *Overland Monthly* and *Out West Magazine*: "Some Account of a Great Western Poet," Vol. 2, Issue 6, June 1869, pp. 538-544; "The Rational of Slang," Vol. 4, Issue 2, Feb. 1870, pp. 187-190; "Through the Lower Coast Counties," Vol. 5, Issue 1, July 1870, pp., 44-54. Available online at University of Michigan (quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/browse.journals/over.html)]



San Bernadino, California in Caldwell's time, circa 1875

especially to his proficiency in the Spanish language, by which he was enabled to make the necessary translations of the old Spanish grants. His services were in much demand as consulting counsel in litigation which arose out of the Spanish-American War. When the abstract business of Harrison County was organized, it took over the scholarly researches of James Parks Caldwell as the basis of the county records. His journalistic work in the state had made known his exact and extensive acquaintance with general literature. A tribute paid to him by a very prominent Mississippian of those years was that Caldwell was "the most highly cultured, the most deeply learned, and, taken all in all, the most remarkable man" he had ever known.

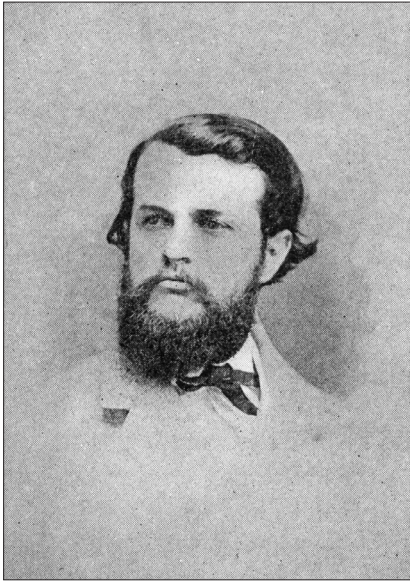
He became a recognized leader among the Confederate veterans of Mississippi and the South. It will be recalled that Jefferson Davis also passed his closing years at Biloxi, at historic Beauvoir, and there wrote his notable work *The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy*. Early in the Civil War Mr. Davis, as president of the Confederacy, had reviewed the Mississippi troops in which Caldwell was a young lieutenant of artillery, and in their later years they were friends. Caldwell's war diaries were studied by Mr. Davis for the preparation of his own work. A letter of thanks when he returned the books to Caldwell throws an interesting light upon the reflections of the revered leader of the South as his life closed. As for Caldwell, those years fulfilled the words which he had written in his diary on Johnson's Island on May 15, 1865:

Terrible news! Nothing less than the capture of our beloved President, whom I honor and respect first among mortals. . . . They may subject him to indignities, but they cannot deprive him of the love of the thousands of devoted men. Nor can they deprive us of

the privilege of being more proud of him in adversity than we were in his hours of glory.

When Jefferson Davis died on December 9, 1889, one of the most widely circulated tributes to his memory was written by Caldwell, as an editorial for the *Commonwealth*, of Jackson, Mississippi.

Of the founders of Sigma Chi, neither Caldwell nor Scobey married. The wartime diaries reveal a beautiful romance with unfading memories of the early years as teacher in Mississippi—but after that the known devotions of his life were the family circle in Ohio and the West,



Caldwell—The Journalist and Author

his literature, his profession, and Sigma Chi. During all the later years at Biloxi he made his home at the Kennedy House, a commercial hotel near the railway station, convenient for his trips to Mississippi City and Gulf port. Uniformly, visitors at the hotel sought out Judge Caldwell, as he was known, ever affable and courteous, and enjoyed his witticisms and reminiscences. Contacts with the Fraternity were never easily possible to him in those years, because of the distance from its centers, and the more limited number of alumni, with but few organized alumni groups. He first renewed his contacts with the Fraternity in its present form of general organization

at the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Sigma Chi as celebrated at Cincinnati and Oxford, June 26-28, 1905. On that occasion, Caldwell again met with Bell, Cooper, and Runkle. Lockwood, Scobey, and Jordan, of the Seven, had gone on to the Chapter Eternal.

Those were wonderful days among the four, who had never all been together since the Commencement of 1857 at Miami University. Three of the four had fought in the Civil War, and it was notable that General "Ben" Runkle and Major "Tom" Bell found that Lieutenant "Jimmy" Caldwell conceded nothing as to the principle for which he had fought and suffered in the sixties. Yet, as he chivalrously said in one of the public gatherings, "My brothers here and I viewed the shield from opposite sides, each equally sure that his vision was clear; and quite as sure am I that not one of us would be willing, were it possible, to

undo his action of the past.” The photograph of the four taken on that occasion afterward came to adorn almost every chapter hall in Sigma Chi.

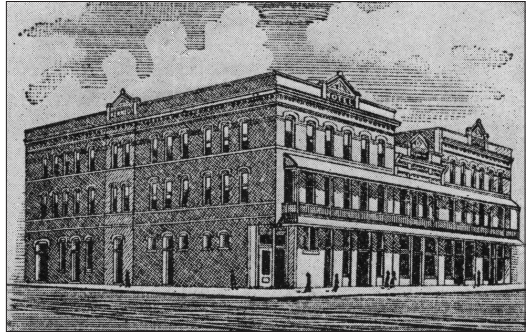
The address made by Founder Caldwell at the Semi-Centennial Celebration was most pleasing in expression, characteristically modest, and historically important. He said in part:

That this happy meeting should have been promoted by the Fraternity and takes place, as it were, in its visible presence, is another overpowering fact, thrilling the heart as with a new and strange emotion of exulting joy, while setting in sharp contrast that weak beginning which we celebrate today. I almost persuade myself, however, that the splendid loyalty to the fraternal idea which I have noted as characteristic of Sigma Chi has given to its founders a more exalted place than they deserve. Not to them only, nor even chiefly, have been due the amazing growth and wonderful progress of our fair Brotherhood, and its magnificent position in the fraternity world—results too marvelous for me to recognize as the natural outcome of any work, in which I have consciously borne part. True it is that without the sowers there had been no hope of harvest; but this abundant fruitage betokens later efforts, when ours had gone to waste amid the turmoil of troublous times.

Those who came after had a harder task, out of which their native energy has wrought a notable success. Men of constructive intellect, it was theirs to conserve the spirit by a radical change of form, to repair and remodel the crumbling foundations, and to rear thereon the stately structure which we now behold. By historical analogy, the Declaration was our part, while they have brought the Constitution, without which all results of patriotic achievement had been lost in the petty bickerings of internal strife. The eminently practical system which these master-minds devised exactly fits the purposes in view, leaving wide liberty to the individual chapter; while bringing the Fraternity into an effective union, at once harmonious and strong, and based upon the very principles to which our country largely owes its greatness and its power. It is pleasing to reflect that two of our original number (foremost among us and leaders from the beginning)—the lamented Jordan, and Runkle here present—were privileged to share the honors of our renaissance. As the least active of the founders, I tender my homage to the real makers of Sigma Chi, content for my own part, having witnessed the planting of the acorn, to rest rejoicing in the far-thrown shadow of the mighty oak.

After the Semi-Centennial occasion Founder Caldwell was more

fully in touch with the work of the Fraternity. Not infrequently some of the active members, usually boys of the southern chapters, sought him out at his quarters in Biloxi, and were delighted with his stories of Sigma Chi in the old days at Oxford. A visitor in that period was Newman Miller, Alpha Pi, Albion College, '93, then editor of the *Sigma Chi Quarterly* and subsequently Grand Consul. At that time Brother Miller, an official in publishing interests, made tentative plans with Brother Caldwell for the publication of his reminiscences in permanent form. The death of the founder, however, followed not many months later, on April 5, 1912. The end came suddenly in the first morning hours. In his room at the Kennedy Hotel were found the latest issues of the *Sigma Chi Quarterly* and *Bulletin*. Funeral services were held on the morning of



The Kennedy Hotel at Biloxi, Mississippi

April 6, and his body was laid at rest in the old and beautiful Biloxi Cemetery.

The memorial adopted by the Bar Association of Harrison County was a notable tribute, and concluded as follows:

Even to those who are not so fortunate as to know this remarkably gifted and lovable man, this story of his life tells much of his character, An A.B. at sixteen, a teacher at seventeen, principal of a high-grade academy at nineteen, a soldier at twenty. Surely this record alone describes a man of fine parts, splendid attainments, and superb courage. . . . No finer scholar has ever graced our Bar, and fortunate indeed were those of us who knew him well, and who enjoyed the enlightening influence of his conversation. Modest almost to a fault, never seeking to exploit himself, he still delighted in the companionship of his friends, and sharing with them the stores of his learning. The same thoroughness that marked his scholarship characterized his legal reading. . .

Above all he was a kindly gentleman in all that the term means and implies. He was the soul of honor. He abhorred wrong and to have wronged another would have pained him inexpressibly. Yet he was positive in character, firm and unyielding as the rock when principle was involved, and courageous and chivalrous to a degree that would challenge the admiration and emulation of the Knights of the Round Table.

Resolved, That in the death of James Parks Caldwell, the state has lost a useful and honored citizen, his family a loving brother, his friends a devoted and loyal comrade, and the bar an able and upright counselor, devoted to the highest conceptions and ethics of the profession. We deeply deplore his loss and recognize in his professional life and conduct an example worthy of all emulation, and finally be it.

Resolved, That the president of this Association be directed to present this preamble and resolutions to the Circuit Court of Harrison County now sitting, on the thirteenth day of April, 1912, with a request that the same be spread upon the minutes of the court, and that a copy hereof be sent to the family of Mr. Caldwell.

Of the family of four brothers and four sisters who grew up in the Caldwell home, all the sisters are living and are residents of Los Angeles; California, They are: Miss Isabella Parks Caldwell, Miss Rebekah Caldwell, Mrs. James H. Beatty, and Mrs. Charles M. Jones. A nephew, Charles M. Jones, Jr., Alpha Upsilon, Southern California, '07, of Sigma Chi, and of Stockton, California, is the possessor of the Sigma Chi badge worn by Founder Caldwell as a member of Old Alpha at Miami University. It is the one remaining badge of those first procured by the founders after the name of the Fraternity was changed from Sigma Phi to Sigma Chi, early in 1856.

In the years which followed the death of Founder Caldwell, Biloxi and its quiet cemetery where rested his earthly remains ceased to be generally known in the Fraternity at large. When the movement for monuments to the founders of Sigma Chi was being advanced in 1921-22 by Grand Consul Joseph T. Miller, Beta, Wooster College, '93, that officer visited Biloxi. He found the Caldwell grave, and arranged with John Lestrade, the veteran caretaker of the place, for special marking and care of the Caldwell lot. Other visitors of the past decade,



The Caldwell Badge

especially the Fraternity alumni at Mobile, shared in this interest. An emphasis given in writings of those years, however, tended to convey an unwarranted impression as to the loneliness of the location of the Caldwell grave. The Caldwell resting-place at Biloxi, far from being a lonely situation, is rather one of the loveliest and most inspiring among all the places where sleep the founders of Sigma Chi.

The Cemetery fronts immediately upon the Beach Boulevard, part of a broad highway which winds along the Gulf, extending as a main thoroughfare from New Orleans eastward to the Florida shores. Adjoining immediately on either side of this God's

Acre, and fronting on the same highway, are the grounds of two of the famous resort hotels of Biloxi. Just across the spacious boulevard are the beaches, with their busy, happy life, and the waters of Mississippi Sound with its yachts and boating, and over all the glorious sunshine and skies of Southern Mississippi and the Gulf. Always there are passersby, many of whom enter within the quaint old cemetery and tarry for the while among the wonderful oaks and magnolias, the vines, and flowers, where Caldwell sleeps.

Here, on February 15, 1930, the Fraternity dedicated its monument to the memory of James Parks Caldwell. Many southern chapters and alumni centers were represented at the exercises, which were in charge of the national officers and leaders of Sigma Chi. They, and former associates of the founder, leaders of the Mississippi bar and others, and the representative of the family circle in California, shared in paying tribute to his worth. The floral tributes from organizations of Sigma Chi, far and near, and from others, were many and beautiful. There, imperishably carved in the granite of the Monument, abides forever Sigma Chi's estimate of the youngest among her Founders:

ONE WHO WAS FOUND FAITHFUL



Supporters of Sigma Chi, Founder Caldwell's Sisters. Left to Right: Rebekah Caldwell, Mary Elizabeth Caldwell Beatty, and Ida Caldwell Jones.