

**073 CALDWELL, JOSEPH F. – [JOSEPH FRANKLIN CALDWELL]**

**Editor & Publisher**

**Winchester, Fincastle, Lewisburg**

Publisher of the *Virginia Reformer* (1819-20) in Winchester with an unidentified Russell (369), of the *Herald of the Valley* (1821-23) in Fincastle with Edgar W. Robinson, and of the *Palladium of Virginia* (1823-31) in Lewisburg; also brother of James Caldwell (071).

The Caldwell name was a common one on the southern bank of the Potomac River in 1800, thanks to the late-colonial-era influx of Scots-Irish settlers arriving from Ulster and Quakers migrating from Pennsylvania; Joseph F. Caldwell was termed "a Quaker" by contemporaries later in his life, so his family apparently came from the Quaker Caldwells who settled in the northern Shenandoah Valley in the 1730s and 1740s, and not the Scots-Irish ones northwest of there. His father, Joseph was born in Frederick County in 1760, but that place could also be in the parts of Frederick that later became Berkeley and Jefferson, along the river shore.

This Caldwell was both a journalist and an attorney, with each vocation playing a significant part in his social standing wherever he resided during his long life. Born in Frederick County, his father was a practicing attorney there who evidently had his two sons trained in one of the town's two press offices, probably that of Jonathan Foster (168), who employed son James as in his office between 1810 and 1819. Foster sold his business at the end of March 1819, inadvertently displacing two young, locally-trained printers – this Caldwell and Peter Klipstine (253). The two were then engaged by a local resident named Russell to publish a new paper, *The Virginia Reformer, and Herald of the Valley*, in competition with McGlassin's Constellation; that proprietor was probably Elisha E. Russell, a Frederick militia captain who opened a reading room in the tavern/hotel that he operated with William Pack at exactly the moment that this new weekly made its initial appearance.

The following spring, this venture came to an end; local Republican leaders negotiated a merger of the two Republican newspapers in advance of the 1820 elections, with McGlassin acquiring the *Reformer's* subscriber list, and folding it into his. Caldwell was then offered the chance to start a new *Herald of the Valley* in the Botetourt County seat of Fincastle. Recognizing that publishing a single paper in a market-town then without one – as brother James had done in Warrenton in 1817 – was a better trade tactic than was issuing a third one in a two-newspaper town like Winchester, the journeyman quickly accepted the offer.

In May or June 1820, Caldwell moved up the Valley to Fincastle; there he issued the first number of his second *Herald of the Valley* in July. His paper would not be that town's first, but its predecessor – the *Fincastle Weekly Advertiser* of David Ammen (008) – had ceased publication in 1801, starved of support; the growth of commerce in southwest Virginia in the interim suggested that another mercantile advertiser would now succeed. The journal that Caldwell produced proved to be the right effort at the right time: it survived, in various guises, until 1858. For its first two years, he published the *Herald* alone; but in mid-1822, he took on a partner named Edgar W. Robinson, apparently an eighteen-year-old native he had trained as a printer. This addition was evidently part of a plan for Caldwell to move on further west to new opportunities. The formal transfer of the paper to Robinson alone came in May 1823; by November, Caldwell had relocated to Lewisburg, the seat of Greenbrier

County some 50 mile to the west, and had begun a new paper there.

*The Palladium of Virginia and Pacific Monitor* was Lewisburg's first newspaper, and so some local historians have claimed that it was the first west of the Blue Ridge, though that honor actually belongs to Morgantown (1804). The persistence of such a distortion probably lies in the importance that Caldwell's paper had in the Greenbrier and New River valleys in the Jacksonian era. It was a journal that focused on the development of that region of Virginia; hence, it would be Caldwell's primary occupation for the next decade. But he also engaged in other enterprises that assisted the development his paper regularly advocated. Caldwell was a practicing attorney there, managed a land-agency concern, taught at the Lewisburg Academy, operated the existing postal route with Charleston, and established new mail-stages linking New Bern, North Carolina with the Ohio River at Huntington, via Lewisburg. These supplementary activities gradually pushed the *Palladium* aside for Caldwell; such a withdrawal was allowed by his long association with, John C. Waggoner (424), a printer who had come with him from Fincastle and who handled the day-to-day activities of their office. As a result, some local historians have assigned the credit for Caldwell's successful and long-lived paper to him and not the editorial partner. In March 1832, Caldwell sold his office to Edward B. Bailey with the fiscal support of Dr. John McElhenney, the Presbyterian minister who founded and still led the Lewisburg Academy; although the pair promptly changed the weekly's name to *The Alleghanian*, it remained loyal to Caldwell's political perspective.

The commercial enterprises that now sustained Caldwell meant that, as the sectional crisis deepened, his loyalties became Unionist, not secessionist. He supported the separation of the counties of western Virginia from the state's eastern ones in 1861. Thus, the aging publisher became a fervent voice in the new Republican party at war's end, and was elected to the new state's House of Delegates in 1867 at the age of seventy-one; there he pressed for laws that would force loyalty oaths on Confederate supporters and prohibit those who had led or aided the Confederacy from holding office in West Virginia. That brief elective service was, however, his last act in the public arena. Caldwell settled into a comfortable retirement, evidently seen as a wise elder; he died in Lewisburg in late 1878.

### ***Personal Data***

Born: May 2 1796 Frederick County, Virginia  
Married: Nov. 8 1819 Ann Tyler Mitchell @ Shenandoah County, Va.  
Died: Dec. 21 1878 Lewisburg, Greenbrier County, VA/WV.  
Children: Virginia F. (b. 1820), Dewitt Clinton (b. 1824), Henry Clay (b. 1832)

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Norona & Shetler; Rice, "West Virginia Printers;" Morton, *Winchester*; Rice, *Greenbrier County*; Callahan, *West Virginia*; genealogical data from Caldwell family charts posted on Ancestry.com (August 2012).