

Calhoun, great statesman

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John C. Calhoun, South Carolina's great statesman, has been described as the "Hamlet and fireeater of the Southern cause." He was the great champion of state's rights in an age when the union came perilously close to disintegrating.

John C. Calhoun was born March 18, 1772, in the only house in the region near Little River in Abbeville District. He was one of five children.

As a youngster he spent a great deal of his time reading. He was sent to Moses Waddell's famed "log college" in Columbia County, Georgia. However, the school folded after Waddell's death, and young John returned home. When his father died in the same year, he took on the responsibility of working on his family's plantation.

Calhoun returned to Waddell's academy when it reopened, then entered Yale College as a junior, graduating in 1804. Today, Yale University still remembers John C. Calhoun. The campus contains a building and a monument in his memory.

After studying law in Litchfield, Conn., and Charleston, Calhoun was admitted to the bar in 1807. He then opened an office at Abbeville near his native home.

Calhoun had a keen interest in public affairs which probably began when he was a very young boy. In 1808 he won a seat in the South Carolina State Legislature and served two terms.

He then went to Congress in 1810 as a member of the House of Representatives. Soon after his arrival in Washington, John C. Calhoun began to make his

mark in politics.

Calhoun had the presence and the charisma of a great statesman and orator. He was very tall and slender, with piercing sharp eyes, a mane of hair and a strong chin.

While a House member, he served on the Foreign Affairs Committee, being the congressman that introduced the bill that declared war on England in 1812.

During his first term of office he also married his wealthy second cousin, Floride Bouncou, with whom he had a happy marriage and seven children.

In 1817 before the end of his third congressional term, Calhoun was appointed Secretary of War by President James Madison. He held this post for eight years, making the War Department more economical and efficient.

Calhoun's political star continued to rise. He was elected vice-president in 1824, serving four years in the John Quincy Adams administration and then beginning in 1828, three years under Andrew Jackson.

At this point it seemed that Calhoun might eventually be-

come president. It appeared that Jackson would no doubt push Calhoun for the presidency once his own term of office expired.

But two years after he became vice-president, Calhoun broke with the Jackson administration. A combination of personal and political differences soured the relationship between Calhoun and Jackson.

Instead, Jackson used his political influence to see that Martin Van Buren got the presidential nomination. Calhoun resigned as vice-president in 1832.

To promote his political views, he once again became a senator. Robert Y. Hayne resigned his senate seat so Calhoun could be elected to it.

During the last half decade of Calhoun's life, his health weakened. He returned to the U.S. Senate March 4, 1850, an emaciated and sick old man.

He had written a speech which was read by Sen. James Mason of Virginia. Calhoun sat silently in a chair. The speech attacked the compromise of 1850, the last real effort before the Civil War to solve the slavery issue.