

Calloway, James ^[1]

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by Richard Iobst, 1979

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James Calloway, physician and officeholder, was born on the South Fork of [New River](#) ^[2] in [Ashe County](#) ^[3]. He was a great-nephew of [Daniel Boone](#) ^[4] and one of twelve children of Elijah and Mary Cuthbert Calloway, early settlers in the county.

Elijah Calloway, a prosperous planter, represented Ashe County in the state House of Commons for many years; James Calloway, educated locally, followed by representing the county for three terms—1828, 1830, and 1831. In 1838, Calloway was described as "now with the old fashioned [*sic*] [Republicans](#) ^[5], but not of the Presidents [Van Buren's] New fangled Democracy." William B. Mears, a representative from [Wilmington](#) ^[6], observed that Calloway "was a sensible, intelligent, liberal & clever fellow, as often on the right side, (as I thought) as any body. His whole course there [in the legislature], impressed me very favorably."

In the early 1830s, Calloway went to Philadelphia to study medicine at [Jefferson Medical College](#) ^[7]; after graduation he settled in Wilkesboro and established a practice that took him into many surrounding counties.

On 25 June 1835 he married Mary L. Carmichael, daughter of Abner Carmichael, sheriff of [Wilkes County](#) ^[8]. They had four children, Mary Virginia, Francis Caroline, Abner Sydenham, and Martha. By his marriage, Calloway became allied with one of the most powerful [Whig](#) ^[9] families in northwestern North Carolina. Leander Bryan Carmichael, one of his brothers-in-law, was a colleague of [Zebulon B. Vance](#) ^[10] in the 1854 [General Assembly](#) ^[11], and Calloway developed a friendship with Vance.

In 1838, Calloway, whose medical practice was flourishing, prevailed upon some of his political allies to secure for him appointment as surgeon of the Third Regiment of North Carolina Militia. As such he served under Lieutenant Colonel John Gray Bynum in the removal of the [Cherokee Indians](#) ^[12] from southwestern North Carolina. Upon his return home, his medical practice expanded, and he also began to invest heavily in real estate in [Wilkes](#) ^[8] and Ashe counties. In the 1850s he was believed to be the wealthiest Whig in Wilkes County.

Calloway's wife died in 1847, and he erected an elaborate marble tombstone over her grave in the Wilkesboro town cemetery. In 1852 he married Annie Perry Yeakle, daughter of William Yeakle of Hagerstown, Md., and Philadelphia. She had been a student at Edgeworth Seminary in [Greensboro](#) ^[13] and had family connections in Wilkes County. They became the parents of Harriet Hoyer, Elizabeth Charlotte, Annie Yeakle, Ruth Bowie, Jane Alice, and another daughter who died as an infant.

Although Calloway first opposed [secession](#) ^[14], after the firing on [Fort Sumter](#) ^[15] he changed his position. He was elected a member of the North Carolina Secession Convention, at which, on 20 May 1861, he voted in favor of secession. The following year he was elected a member of the council of state.

The collapse of the [Confederacy](#) ^[16] found Calloway's affairs "almost hopelessly embarrassed." His greatest property holdings in the postwar period lay west of the Mississippi River in Missouri and Kansas. Their management caused him to move to Kansas in 1870; his health failed while he was there, however, and he returned to Wilkesboro in 1872. He was a man of great religious principles and in 1849 helped to organize St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wilkesboro. He then provided the funds to purchase an organ. He was buried in the churchyard.

Under the terms of his will, his property was left to his wife, their four surviving children and the two surviving children of his first marriage. Because of a number of small claims against the estate, his business affairs were not untangled until the mid-1880s, even though his executor, George H. Brown of Statesville, was an attorney of note.

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