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## JOSEPH E. JOHNSON AUTHOR OF FRONTIER NEWS, PROMOTION, AND PROGRESS

MICHAEL S. HUEFNER AND SHAUNA ANDERSON YOUNG

News editors in the nineteenth century have been viewed as paramount figures in establishing the community life of small towns. While opinions differ over exactly how much influence to ascribe to these newsmen, most historians agree that they held a prominent place.<sup>1</sup> Political parties, as a primary source of funding for newspapers at the time, ensured that reporting provided a favorable spin on things. News editors of the frontier usually mixed together short items on travel, neighboring settlements, politics, editorial commentary, and advertisements, driven by patron political interests and the desire for community growth.<sup>2</sup> In this process, editors functioned as open promoters, not expected to restrain their

views with the lens of impartiality—nor expecting in return that readers would question the bright future that they saw as destiny.<sup>3</sup> This brought newspapers into a kind of alliance with railroad companies as both sides campaigned to increase the population in support of their own economic and social interests, with news editors doing the promoting and railroads bringing people and trade prospects.<sup>4</sup> But all of this depended on the cultural backdrop of “manifest destiny” at the time, a composite of American dreams for progress generally equated with the advancement of white settlement westward.

Joseph Ellis (J. E.) Johnson fit this profile of editor-promoter, but he also expanded it, often placing greater stock in advertisements and community observations than in political issues. When he took the reins as editor of the *Council Bluffs Bugle* in 1853, he shifted the paper’s emphasis significantly toward local business, greatly increasing the advertising space. While the *Bugle* maintained a definite orientation toward the Democratic Party and its politics in the region, Johnson’s championing of party interests does not distinguish him from his contemporaries. Many other papers relied heavily on anonymous descriptions in praise of their town’s surround-

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FIG. 1. "View of the Missouri River and Council Bluffs, from an Elevation," a steel engraving by Frederick Hawkins Piercy. Such views of the plains and river inspired Johnson's lofty praise. Courtesy of the Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

ing land, but Johnson more often filled this role himself, traveling regularly and crafting various romantic portrayals of the area.

Like other editors, Johnson made it one of his primary goals to capitalize on the national frontier movement and attract westward travelers, calling them to make their home in Council Bluffs, then a new town on the Missouri River. He advertised aggressively for travelers to stop and build, or at least to stock up on goods in town, perhaps fearing that the mystique of frontier settlement might soon leave the Middle Missouri River Valley behind. He reached out to readers in eastern cities, promoting the freedom and opportunity of the West. His descriptions of the local bluffs (steep-faced hills) and adjoining plains flowed with romanticism as he called settlers to enjoy a life of ease and steady profits on the Missouri. By channeling Americans' westward-facing excitement, Johnson facilitated Council Bluffs' development over time.

Of course, the editor stood to profit from the town's growth. He made his living in land sales, the business of various shops around town, and the sale of news subscriptions. On the other hand, Johnson sought to develop his community in several long-term ways, beyond simply increasing sales and population.<sup>5</sup> His news articles in-

vited potential settlers to come to Council Bluffs and make money themselves while also establishing the town as a center for commerce. As his role as a local leader grew, Johnson used his influence to pursue social reform in Council Bluffs, but this also meant that he prescribed behavior in all areas of his readers' lives. In calling for community involvement and individual improvement, he raised his vision toward all-around progress, but he saw it only in terms of his personal ideals.

In spite of weaknesses, Johnson's spiritedness, progressiveness, sense of community, and outreach efforts set him apart from other news editors. These things were visible throughout his life as he established newspapers and promoted frontier settlements in Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, and Arizona, but this article will specifically consider his community development in Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he worked the longest as a news editor. His time in this town on the edge of the Great Plains will act as a case study for his life, as well as for the enterprising spirit of many frontier men and women. Johnson's writings in the *Bugle* show that he aimed to build a superior city, as did his contemporaries, but that he went beyond this in seeking to improve his community in the long term economically, socially, and morally. He had a knack for getting things moving, but also for

overreaching, representing both aspects of American frontier opportunism in the Plains.

#### A PROMINENT VOICE

Johnson served as editor of the *Council Bluffs Bugle* from September 1853 until May 1857, when he moved farther west. Issues of the newspaper from this period, although they are not all available today, provide substantial content for analysis. This article draws from five existing issues for 1853, none for 1854, sixty-three for 1855, nine for 1856, and thirteen for 1857, so findings naturally favor Johnson's content and temperament in 1855 and afterward.<sup>6</sup> While this arrangement cannot fully represent Johnson in his time and place, the opinions he expressed and the articles he chose to print do provide an important glimpse of an engaging personality and influential character. The content and rhetoric of Johnson's articles form the primary evidence in support of the editor's unique vision presented here, supplemented by personal correspondence and Johnson's personal diary.

Johnson's place in the historical record has been limited to a few notable events around the midpoint of the nineteenth century, mostly occurring in the early settlement of Nebraska and becoming increasingly overlooked by the end of that century.<sup>7</sup> By his own account, he built the first house (other than a log cabin) in what is now Pottawattamie County in 1848.<sup>8</sup> Kanesville, Iowa, was renamed Council Bluffs City in 1853, part of a public campaign led by Johnson.<sup>9</sup> He is said to have used his influence to establish Nebraska's territorial capital at Omaha rather than Bellevue in 1855.<sup>10</sup> He is also credited with publishing the first newspaper in Nebraska Territory, the *Omaha Arrow*, and later with printing the *Huntsman's Echo*, Nebraska's first paper west of Omaha, near Shelton.<sup>11</sup> These events are often cited to show Johnson's impact in the settlement of the Omaha-Council Bluffs area, but his influence outside these tidy bits of trivia has been largely forgotten. Perhaps it is because his plans never fully materialized—his dream for a metropolitan Council Bluffs faded as Omaha commercially outpaced it, and then his connection to Omaha as Nebraska's

capital lost meaning when Lincoln took its place. In his time, however, Johnson wielded considerable influence in this part of the Plains.

This is not to say that every enterprise he touched succeeded. In 1856, promoting another town—Crescent City, Iowa—won Johnson recognition as “one of its leading proprietors and proponents.”<sup>12</sup> Although he spearheaded its booming settlement with “great zeal,” a darkened financial landscape in 1857 and Council Bluffs' ability to draw railroads away from Crescent led to its decline.<sup>13</sup> This failure highlights the competing aspects of Johnson's legacy as a risk-taking visionary. He often set things in motion, but some of his ventures fizzled quickly. Seemingly undeterred, Johnson continued to build up the towns beyond Iowa in which he lived, traveling over 1,500 miles across the West.<sup>14</sup>

To introduce Johnson's work in Council Bluffs, it is first important to understand his opinion of the town. After surveying the city from a hill in 1855, Johnson wrote,

Before us lay our home of adoption, (Council Bluffs) the queen city of the Missouri, as if spread before us upon a magic scroll. . . . Whilst to the westward, the leafless groves, and broad meadows, vales and highlands of Nebraska for many miles. . . . [The Missouri's] waters gleaming under the bright April sun, lik [sic] a belt of polished silver; the whole scenery around and before, forming a picture far more bright than the most fertile imagination could suggest or invent.<sup>15</sup>

While the bluffs and plains along the Missouri River are undoubtedly beautiful, even the most ardent lovers of midwestern landscapes should be able to discern Johnson's embellishment. Part of this was surely meant to counter the popular image of the Plains as the “Great American Desert” that had developed by the nineteenth century, accentuating the greenery and garden-like beauty of the land.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, this penchant for the dramatic was also a part of Johnson's unique personality.

Johnson's romantic style differs greatly from current news editors, who almost encourage skepticism by printing their personal opinions in the

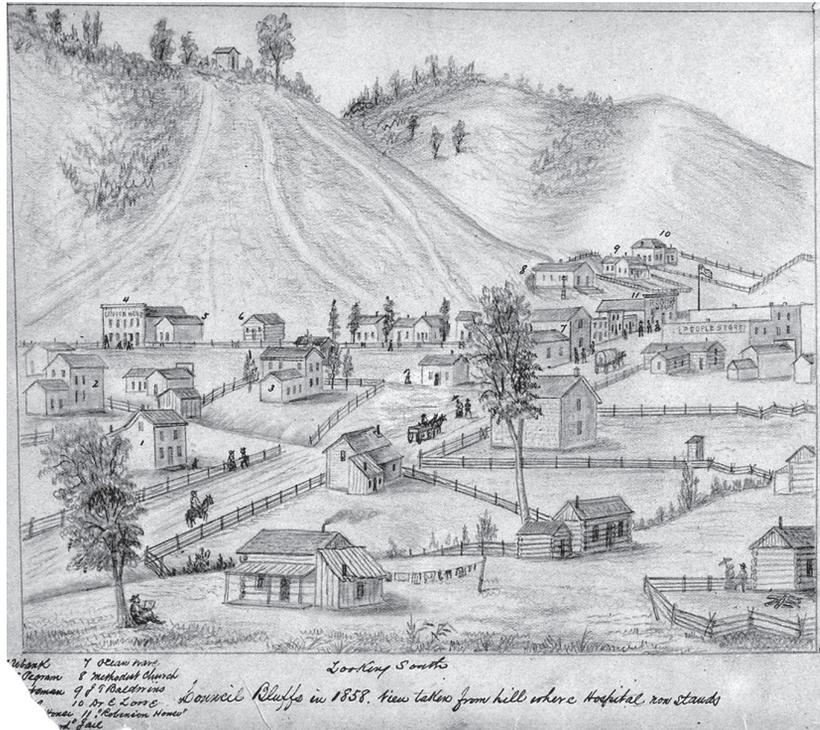


FIG. 2. "Council Bluffs 1858—Looking South," drawing by George Simon. This view of town by an early resident provides a sense of how the bluffs along the Missouri River form a dramatic contrast to the surrounding plains. Courtesy of Council Bluffs Public Library.

same section as political cartoons. In contrast, frontier editors of the 1850s generally made less effort to strike an objective tone, and Johnson was as outspoken about his views as any. Be that as it may, he still worked to establish his credibility in other ways, such as by portraying himself as an important public figure. In the process, he found ways to make both his opinions and persona memorable.

To show his public importance, Johnson characterized himself as a regular traveler with scores of connections. This excerpt, apparently from a note left in Johnson's office by someone with the pseudonym "Chinkapin," illustrates this aspect of the editor:

The Bugle man is a queer genius. Calling for the paper the other day, we found him writing machine poetry, at the same time talking to a party of Omaha braves, just come in; con-

versing with a daguerrean artist about a family picture, and with a late member of the Legislature in regard of the Liquor Law; with Frank, about one of his just finished caricatures; a Nebraska man, about the Platte Valley Railroad; and with a stranger who had just made a first call, puffing at his cigar and listening to inquiries at the Post Office for letters. No wonder the Bugle is read with so much interest by everybody and gets the widest circulation of any paper in the West.<sup>17</sup>

Johnson's inclusion of such a glowing image of himself reveals much. The writer of the note conveyed wonderment of a man who could carry on multiple wide-ranging conversations and tasks at the same time. Portraying Johnson as an insider in the discussion of hot topics such as liquor laws, Native Americans, and railroads, the note gave the editor status in the local politi-

cal scene and economy, making him a desirable advocate for readers' interests. Further, if readers wanted someone who could sympathize with domestic concerns, they could see that he cared about the home front through the symbolic act of having his family's picture taken. It is doubtful that Johnson could have performed any of these simultaneous tasks very meaningfully, but Johnson sanctioned that impression by publishing the note, facilitating a view of himself as sought-after, knowledgeable, and influential.

But did the *Bugle* actually command "the widest circulation of any paper in the West"? It seems more likely that Johnson meant to print "Largest circulation of any Newspaper in Western Iowa and Nebraska," which appeared in the paper in September 1855 in a subtitle on the second page. Yet even the reliability of the more modest statement is difficult to gauge. An article in a smaller paper was published earlier that year supporting the idea that the *Bugle* was widely circulated. In it, the editor of the *West Union (Iowa) Pioneer* lamented his paper's removal from the *Bugle's* exchange list, which had been reduced from 400 newspapers around the country to 100 until the spring, when Council Bluffs could receive new shipments of paper.<sup>18</sup> The article also noted Johnson's promise that his paper would regain its previous circulation, but it is unclear whether it ever did. Either way, this reference demonstrates that there was at least one point in time when hundreds of outside news editors and potentially each of their readers were exposed to Johnson's material.

Any positive publicity from other editors and word of mouth would have been a great relief to Johnson, since becoming physically visible to potential subscribers in spread-out frontier settlements was difficult. Collections of farms and homes were just starting to sprout among the bluffs and creeks of the Middle Missouri River Valley, forming mainly on the east side of the river between Sioux City, Iowa, in the north and St. Joseph, Missouri, in the south. Lumber was particularly scarce, forcing new communities to branch out for resources. So although Johnson exchanged papers with many other editors in the region, he had to cover a lot of ground, literally, to visit settle-

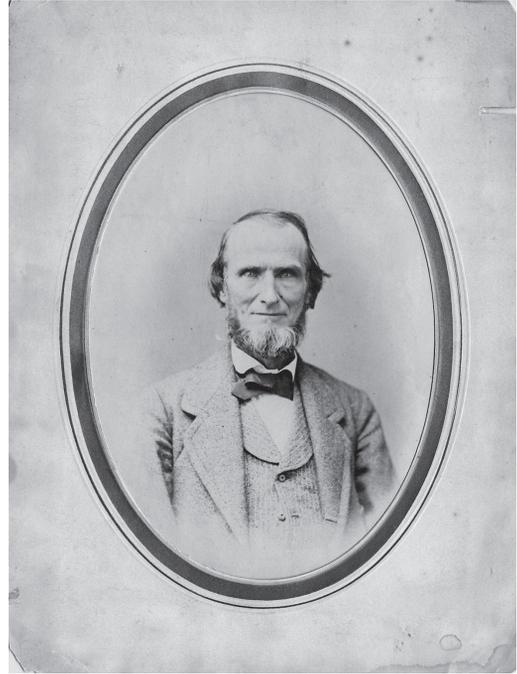


FIG. 3. Photograph of Joseph E. Johnson, taken near the end of his life in St. George, Utah. The glint in his eye seems to capture an element of his lively personality. Courtesy of J. Willard Marriott Special Collections, Digitized Images, University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City.

ments on which he wished to report. All the same, he assumed the role of the omnipresent reporter and published frequent travel observations.

It appears that he probably executed this role well, as seen in Nathan H. Parker's book *Iowa as It Is in 1855*. Designed as a promotional guide for would-be settlers, the book draws extensively upon the *Bugle's* descriptions of regional topography, resources, and prospects for its thirteen-page chapter entitled "Western Iowa and Nebraska," which specifically acknowledges, "We are indebted to the author of the *Council Bluffs Eagle* for most of the matter under this head."<sup>19</sup> Although the book sold 10,000 copies in its first month of publication, readers might not have known the contribution of J. E. Johnson and the *Council Bluffs Bugle* rather than the nonexistent *Eagle*.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps in forgetfulness or humility, Johnson's later references to the newly released book did not correct this misinformation. Even so, John-

son's observations were being published on an increasing scale.

Johnson's highly dramatic personality formed another important part of his editorial persona. Writing filler material for the *Bugle* when he had not received exchanges from other newspapers, Johnson once lamented that he had spent the day tormented by "the Imp of darkness," fighting to stave off the devil himself in his idleness.<sup>21</sup> A few weeks after making this highly exaggerative statement, Johnson wrote a description of the spring weather, noting that the return of "cheerful" foliage was good enough to "cure the gout, or an inclination to hang yourself."<sup>22</sup> Adding a splash of drama to even commonplace events and subjects, Johnson's theatricality ran deep.

However, the context of these articles shows another aspect of his character. The first article appeared in the same issue in which Johnson announced the death of his good friend M. H. Clark, setting a somber tone that was reflected in subsequent issues for a short time.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Johnson's references to depression and death—with suicide as an extreme example—were accompanied by observations of the beauty of nature and everyday life. This creates a picture of a man using the press as a means of coping. Johnson as a very public personality gave his emotions public expression, yet he did not make himself the center of the tragedy by dwelling on his own pain. He tempered the few melodramatic references to his suffering in these issues by drawing attention to such things as refreshing spring weather and "soul-beaming-charming, fragrant wild flowers" in bloom around the neighborhood.<sup>24</sup> He also celebrated the late Clark's abundant "life, vigor, and ambition" and the way he "labored for years incessantly for the good, wellbeing and early settlement of [Council Bluffs]."<sup>25</sup> Johnson's loss was portrayed as the community's loss, inviting fellow citizens into a common grieving process.

This personal outreach from writer to reader was also apparent in Johnson's announcement that he would be attending a party that night aboard the steamship *Clara*, which had just arrived with a shipment of goods. Johnson not only encouraged readers to socialize but also implied that they would help each other move on from

the community's loss in a place where "the merry-hearted may dance, and the more grave, enjoy the amusements of the more giddy." He ended with, "We are off to the Clara!"<sup>26</sup> This exclamation demonstrated his desire to connect with neighbors both socially and emotionally, through the press as well as personal interaction. Although the editor was undoubtedly dramatic, this side of him also complemented his public role in the community.

A few of the ways in which Johnson developed the role of a local leader have been explored, from his creation of a knowledgeable persona in the public eye to his efforts to connect personally with his readers. Yet in recognizing the influence that this pioneer editor had on his community, it is necessary to return to the issue of how greatly self-interest factored into Johnson's work. Most of the Mormon community in Council Bluffs, of which Johnson was a part, departed in 1852 to join fellow believers in the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>27</sup> It is not clear exactly why Johnson remained in spite of many letters from family and friends in Salt Lake City pleading with him to make the journey. One such letter from Johnson's sister, Esther M. LeBaron, to his wife, Hannah, mentioned that Brigham Young was disappointed with their decision to stay behind. According to Esther, Young said it would be better for Johnson to be in Salt Lake "with a clean shirt on than be [in Council Bluffs] with a million of gold."<sup>28</sup> It is doubtful that Johnson accumulated such riches in Council Bluffs, but if his sister spoke truthfully, then Young felt that Johnson had chosen wealth over faith. Even if Young had no opinion, however, by including it, Johnson's own sister expressed her belief that materialism was a primary motive for him.

Perhaps financial concerns took greater effect once Johnson became a business owner in Council Bluffs, when the potential for greater riches might have spoken louder than religious sacrifice. Finances would have been a major concern for Johnson, who had multiple businesses and a large household. On the other hand, he had managed to stay with Mormonism from his youth in New York until the time under consideration in Iowa.<sup>29</sup> To identify with this much-maligned

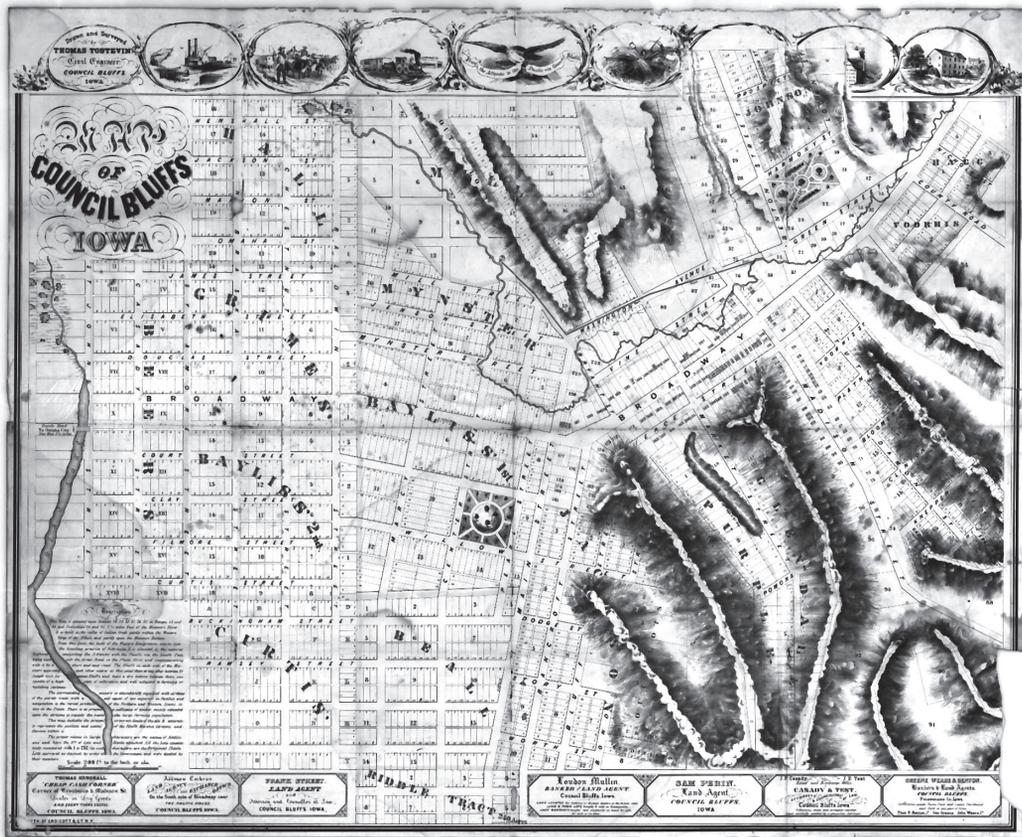


FIG. 4. "Map of Council Bluffs, Iowa," surveyed and drawn by Thomas Tostevin, 1854. The various new additions to Council Bluffs pictured here indicate the steady growth that triggered the excitement of town promoters like J. E. Johnson. Kanesville, the original name of Council Bluffs, is the older part of town settled slantwise in the bluffs on the right. Courtesy of Council Bluffs Public Library.

group in the nineteenth century would seem a strange way to pursue riches, especially with the frequent uprooting of home and business that were required to escape persecution. He eventually did leave for the western Mormon colonies in the 1860s but gave political reasons for leaving.<sup>30</sup> Many factors aside from money were at play here.

However, it does appear that Johnson's family had a relatively comfortable life in Council Bluffs. The diary of Johnson's daughter Christie states: "We were considered quite well to do, as related to me by my mother. Our smoke house was filled with meat, our cellars packed with provisions of all kinds."<sup>31</sup> Johnson and his family did

meet with some material success, and although the extent is difficult to determine, the pursuit of riches was likely a significant factor in Johnson's decisions.

But even if Johnson had actively sought to accumulate wealth from his businesses, he did so before many of the negative connotations surrounding capitalism had arisen. Current consciousness of socioeconomic inequity and oppression of labor by businesses has developed slowly, in part because nineteenth-century businessmen were viewed in a much different light. In the early days of capitalism in America, the emerging economic system was often framed as a meritocracy, so that

success in business represented moral strength. This blindly protected the wealthy many times, but it also placed a social expectation on business leaders to be actively involved in community leadership and building. By accepting this role as a booster, businessmen who “boosted” their own success provided an example for community members and were in a position to advocate local needs to the outside.<sup>32</sup> Johnson’s motives within this system cannot be confirmed as pure. But an indication of his morality can be determined by these standards if his fervent advertising of his own business interests were complemented by an equally strong advocacy of the community’s interests and reputation. The next section will elaborate.

#### BUILDING UP THE BLUFFS

Judging solely from the earlier description Johnson gave of the “magic scroll” landscape on which he lived, readers might conclude that he believed the Council Bluffs area to be at the height of its potential. Indeed, J. E. Johnson’s youngest son and biographer, Rufus D. Johnson, wrote of his father that “one of his favorite occupations was writing articles describing and praising the country around the Kaneshville area.”<sup>33</sup> Yet for all his lauding of the land, Johnson did not see Council Bluffs as a finished product so much as a place with the resources needed to build a significant city. Like his frontier news editor peers, Johnson envisioned great urban growth for his town, though that was certainly not the only aspect of growth he supported.

Well in keeping with his character, Johnson had perhaps one of the more dramatic visions for growth among his peers in the West. He started with reality, however, heartily praising Council Bluffs and its people for the development they had already brought about in their city. Writing in 1853, he said, “We are working people out here, which is the reason of our rapid advance in wealth and importance. Only think, our little Indian village of five years ago is now a city of about 2000 inhabitants—doesn’t that look like energy and industry?”<sup>34</sup> Johnson prided himself in each piece of evidence that showed that Council Bluffs

was growing, constantly tracking its population to then make bold predictions for its future growth. Using statistics for the state of Iowa in 1855, he claimed that it was “not unlikely” that the nearly 500,000 inhabitants would exceed one million by 1860.<sup>35</sup> For Council Bluffs specifically, Johnson felt that its potential “wealth and importance” knew no bounds, saying in 1855: “Our future prospects for becoming a great central mart of business, commerce, and enterprise are undisputed.” Going further, he declared, “Every thing indicates that Council Bluffs, will, at no very distant day, be the great metropolis of the West, as New York is to the East.”<sup>36</sup>

Issues of the *Bugle* often contained reports on various construction projects around town where the “click of the hammer” and the “musical grating of the saw” carried on happily.<sup>37</sup> One issue reported on ten different local projects, noting how plans for further growth put the city “upon the highway of progression.”<sup>38</sup> The busy editor seemed determined to highlight everything in Council Bluffs that showed a busy, urbanizing track for its future. But this desire to emulate eastern cities makes for an ironic contrast, considering how Johnson usually decried their terrible living conditions. Evidently, the river city that Johnson envisioned would gain the size and importance of New York City yet avoid the poverty and corruption that he criticized in eastern cities. Perhaps he felt that the freshness of the frontier precluded such Old World problems. Either that or he felt his supervision of local progress would chart out a different course for Council Bluffs.

Just as drama was not the only aspect of Johnson’s character, urban growth was not the only aspect of community building that he considered important. On one occasion, Johnson turned his dotting eye to some land a few miles to the north that “cannot be excelled for beauty.” More specifically, this land could not be surpassed for “advantages in agriculture, abundance of timber, or convenience of water and water powers.”<sup>39</sup> This could represent an effort by Johnson to attack the “Great American Desert” image, but his description seems to speak in practical more than aesthetic terms. The passage seems less concerned with hypnotizing prospective settlers with visions

of paradise, and more interested in portraying raw materials simply waiting to be used. Any paradise here was to be found in the terminology of a farmer, construction manager, and engineer. And just as Johnson described this potential in Council Bluffs from various professional angles, he encouraged its growth and improvement in a variety of ways: economically (as this quote suggests), socially, and morally.

To begin with economics, one of the ways that Johnson put the community's development first was through encouraging local competition with his own businesses. Johnson owned many businesses around Council Bluffs and marketed aggressively, filling the pages of each issue of the *Bugle* with numerous advertisements for his goods and service. While it makes sense that a businessperson would try to sell as much as he could to people coming through, his mode of persuasion is less clear. For example, Johnson published an article by his printer, L. O. Littlefield, in November 1855 addressing readers in New York and on the East Coast. Littlefield contrasted the rocky, root-filled soil of New England with the rich, uncluttered soil of western Iowa, encouraging eastern farmers to come "for enterprise, for comfort, and for wealth."<sup>40</sup> By printing an article that called for new settlers to come to Council Bluffs and profit from the land, Johnson loosened his grip on local markets. Inviting scores of competitors in his own markets appears counterintuitive. It is true that Johnson was a prominent agent in the sale of local lands, so self-interest might have been involved on that account, but it might not have been his principal motive. While Johnson would have profited from the sale of land warrants, he would also have added competitors to cut into his share of crop sales. On the positive side, additional producers in the community would bolster the population, spur competition, and bring in outside money with the sale of surplus crops. In this way, Johnson willingly gave up some personal profits to advance economic growth.

The idea of supporting the local economy also emerged when Johnson discussed the future of railroads in Council Bluffs. Seldom printing without mentioning railroad meetings, projects, or benefits or some kind, Johnson repeatedly

touted the prospects of rail transportation. For instance, the lead article for the December 21, 1853, issue, which filled almost the entire front page, reported on a convention that discussed future railroads from Council Bluffs to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>41</sup> Articles about railroad meetings and prospects reappeared throughout the issue. This Democratic paper gave top billing to railroads, placing reports from several Iowa Democratic conventions later in the paper. Perhaps Johnson felt that the patronage of his partisan subscribers was not in question. Whatever the case might have been, he saw greater importance in promoting expanded rail transportation in the area, placing local economics ahead of local politics. His emphasis on railroads is even more striking, however, because advocating for this newer form of transportation would have undermined his work in horseshoes and wagon parts at his blacksmith shop, for example. Once again, Johnson openly encouraged a form of local growth despite its threat to part of his income.

As for Johnson's share of land sales mentioned earlier, the evidence shows that he encouraged competition here too. He related cases of a few Council Bluffs residents making thousands of dollars from speculating in the local land market. Going further, Johnson stated, "These are not isolated instances, but what are daily occurring," simply part of a general increase of property values in the area.<sup>42</sup> These advertisements brought Johnson profits with each purchase at the land office, but it is now clear that he did not keep this market to himself either. He actively encouraged speculators. Because Johnson attracted competitors to his business interests on multiple fronts, his record shows that maintaining monopolies was not his objective. In fact, rather than trumpeting his own history of business success in the face of new competitors, Johnson celebrated growth and the "certainty of [Council Bluffs] becoming a second Chicago, in Rail Roads and business."<sup>43</sup> It appears that he did not care whether he dominated land sales but whether people knew that they were helping to establish the "business" reputation of Council Bluffs, to attract railroads, and to build a city to rival Chicago in importance. Each of his considerations seems directed toward the



FIG. 5. The standard header for Johnson's paper. Note the theatrical subtitle: "Truth, tho' crushed, shall rise again." *Council Bluffs Bugle*, April 6, 1855, 2.

development of a more stable, long-term economy in the community.

While Johnson might have actively facilitated local competition, he spoke less kindly of regional competition. He proclaimed the advantages of Nebraska's resource-rich Platte River Valley for building railroads locally, as opposed to Kansas, which he argued had insufficient water and timber.<sup>44</sup> Johnson also contended on political terms, calling attention to instability southward. As the debate over expanding slavery into Kansas raged on, Johnson's updates on the unrest would have made a powerful argument against settling there in the 1850s. He described the slavery feud in Kansas as "a blight and a mildew upon the prosperity of the country," even creating "a complete state of turmoil."<sup>45</sup> Though Johnson sometimes exaggerated, this imagery seems somewhat consistent with the backdrop of the "Bleeding Kansas" years that preceded the Civil War. Johnson's negative campaign shows that he was committed to protecting the economic prospects of Council Bluffs and the larger western Iowa and Nebraska region.

Johnson also advocated Council Bluffs' betterment socially. One way he did this was by publicizing the accomplishments and activities of various neighborhood clubs and organizations. For example, in 1855, when the Ladies' Congregational Sewing Society hosted a charity dinner for the local Congregational church, Johnson made special mention of the society in the paper beyond the notice for which they had paid.<sup>46</sup> The next week, he announced the formation of a new agricultural association for Pottawattamie County and listed its newly selected officers.<sup>47</sup> Not long after, an article appeared on the annual

meeting of the Congregational Association of Council Bluffs acknowledging that it had more than doubled its membership in the past year.<sup>48</sup> Ever the community booster, Johnson gave the town's social organizations a prominent place in the public eye, portraying them as burgeoning and important.

He also promoted social involvement in community activities that showed the town's liveliness, such as holiday celebrations and dances hosted at local hotels and ballrooms. Festivals and parties celebrating everyone from George Washington and Benjamin Franklin to "pioneers" generally, as well as gatherings for professional associations, were all made very visible.<sup>49</sup> Johnson trumpeted these opportunities for Council Bluffs residents to both socialize and honor their cultural models. In his reports on Council Bluffs dances, Johnson made special mention of the numbers of people who attended and the general level of enjoyment he sensed at these events. Surely curious readers in the city and in neighboring communities were meant to see that there was fun to be had in Council Bluffs.<sup>50</sup>

The *Bugle's* printed advertisements also underscored social expectations. For example, Johnson endorsed the weekly cotillion party sponsored by Misters Orton and Russell at their Nebraska Hall establishment. But in doing so, Johnson encouraged men specifically to attend the cotillion, reasoning that "a man is no gentleman who cannot induce some lady to attend him to the house of merriment."<sup>51</sup> Lively dances, cotillion parties, and festivals were clearly an important aspect of Johnson's progressing city but so were Victorian gender roles.

A final and fairly overarching way in which

Johnson sought to improve his community was in prescribing his ideas for its moral development, as hinted by his social expectations. Although his ideas carried a subjective view of what was good for the community, Johnson argued passionately for the town's improvement. Much of what he said predicted that the future of the community rested on creating good citizens in the younger generation, so he accordingly watched over the activities of young people. For adults, Johnson placed great faith in reform movements to mend society's problems within and beyond his community.

In addressing youth, Johnson condemned negative trends such as substance abuse and suggested areas where youth could make constructive contributions. He warned boys in Council Bluffs to think twice before chewing tobacco, appealing to their desire for physical and economic freedom. Shunning certain drugs was necessary to avoid addiction as well as the financial burden of purchasing it, Johnson reasoned.<sup>52</sup> He illustrated this point by remarking that a boy who chewed tobacco, were he to chew a two-inch plug each day for fifty years, would go through enough tobacco to stretch a distance of "near one mile and a quarter." The editor then stated that a potential beginner should prepare for what would inevitably be "one of the exercises of his life." Simple arithmetic reveals that Johnson significantly underestimated the daily quantity needed to accomplish this feat, but the ludicrous imagery and dryly comical tone represent a clear attempt to reach a young audience.<sup>53</sup> With characteristic embellishment, Johnson framed an argument to help young people keep future opportunities open.

To counteract temptations, Johnson suggested community actions to positively channel the energy of local youth. Johnson once remarked that he had noticed among the young men of Council Bluffs "a disposition to get up a brass band."<sup>54</sup> He invited the boys to raise funds to buy instruments and called on the "generous citizens" in town to help, adding, "What say you all hands, shall we have a brass band?" How Johnson noticed this "disposition" is not exactly clear, but it appears from such examples that he spent enough time around young people to notice their interests,

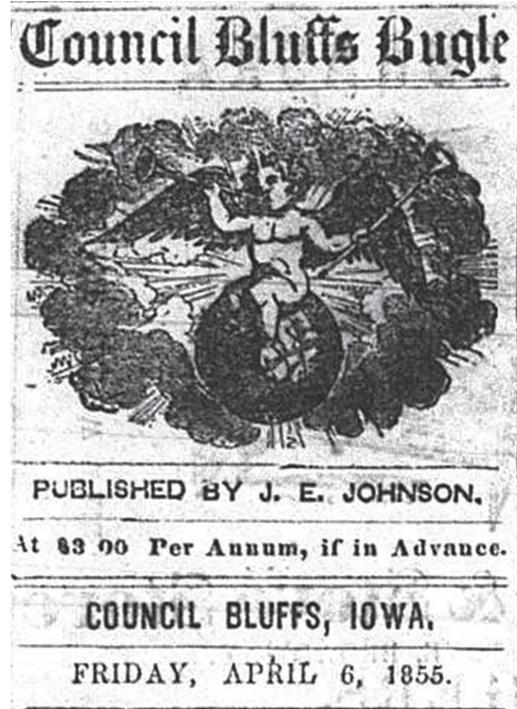


FIG. 6. Printed graphic of a cherub that usually appeared atop the second page of the *Council Bluffs Bugle*, generally indicating the beginning of the local items section. *Council Bluffs Bugle*, April 6, 1855, 2.

both good and bad. His intention, however, was clearly to steer them toward productive lives.

Johnson also identified moral underpinnings in the formal education of Council Bluffs youth, one in a series of social issues in which he pursued reform. In one particularly vehement article, Johnson rebuked the "usually shrewd and intelligent citizens" of the community for failing to build even one schoolhouse when the town had four saloons.

"We blush to own it," Johnson remarked. In his eyes, the threat of this oversight loomed great because schools symbolized not only places to teach skills but also "all-powerful engines of freedom and advancement."<sup>55</sup> In this instance, the editor made a clear connection between the educational resources provided for youth in Council Bluffs and the community's future. More depressing than the image of idle boys chewing miles of tobacco was the lack of academic emphasis. For

Johnson, this undermined foundational American ideals of opportunity and progress.

But improving education was just one of the many progressive reforms he proposed. Bringing items bearing upon the temperance and women's rights movements freely to the forefront, Johnson embraced changes on a broader scale. Yet even as he reported gains for these interests, Johnson also decried the disruptive "rascality" of abolitionists, the Underground Railroad, and the Free-Soil movement.<sup>56</sup> If Johnson personally disliked the institution of slavery and its expansion, he avoided saying so directly. Responding to the news that Kansas would join the Union as a slave state, he said, "We can't help it if we would, and we certainly have no desire to meddle."<sup>57</sup> Johnson ended this statement with a perfect summary of his ambivalent stance and a faithful reflection of the Democratic position: "Our motto—'The people, the sovereigns.'" Unfortunately, he seems more disturbed by the messiness of efforts to abolish slavery than by the practice itself. This demonstrates that while Johnson supported some progressive movements, he skirted others.

On the issue of temperance, Johnson frequently spoke affirmatively and publicized related news. Some of his opposition to alcohol abuse might have been fed by momentum within the state, since Iowa passed a bill increasing regulations on the sale of alcohol that led to full prohibition by the end of 1855.<sup>58</sup> For his part, Johnson promoted the lectures of traveling authorities on temperance and published various warnings against alcoholism.<sup>59</sup> One opportunity came when Moses Thompson died wandering in the cold, presumably from drunkenness, tragically abandoning his wife and three children.<sup>60</sup> Another time, with the well-being of youth in mind, Johnson warned parents to "watch their boys and not allow them to visit the dram shops, nor run at large without control." To not do so would be to abandon them to a future "wrecked upon the rocks of dissipation and crime." He ended this article with the ringing statement, "Beware in time."<sup>61</sup> Denouncing the social drinking of the young in tippling houses, Johnson expressed support for both the national temperance movement and its applications in the lives of local youth.

While he left it to states to take care of a social problem like slavery, Johnson took it upon himself to ensure that the issue of alcohol abuse was solved locally.

The women's rights movement also concerned Johnson, although his support sometimes drifted toward playing both sides of the debate. An interesting example can be seen in a little sketch: "Mary, Mary, where in the deuce are my pants?" "Pants, sir? I reckon missis has 'em. She's gone to convention she has."<sup>62</sup> Employing the age-old metaphor of husbands fending off their wives for the workpans, this sketch showed the husband as a fool. However, these lines could also have conveyed that any woman who attended a "convention" or other political event threatened the man's role in the household and the related social order. Some might have laughed at the joke, but others undoubtedly fidgeted at the suggestion that patriarchal power was being undermined. Without an explanation from Johnson, other examples of his feelings about women's rights need to be considered.

Previously, Johnson had lauded the citizens of Winterset, Iowa, for inviting Amelia Bloomer, a resident of Council Bluffs, to speak at an Independence Day celebration in 1855.<sup>63</sup> This allowed not just a woman but an affirmed women's rights activist to speak in the public sphere. To Johnson, this invitation symbolized "the progression in our country, of woman's cause," and reflected especially well upon the people of Winterset. Here he attributed a small town with instantly adding steam to a movement of national scope, influence he undoubtedly wished for his community. Later in the article, Johnson also contended that women were just as capable as men in letters and oration.<sup>64</sup> Beyond pushing for minimal gains, Johnson's support of women's rights posed a major threat the status quo by suggesting that men and women could be equal in the public sphere.

Johnson's coverage of this national issue also provided for local involvement, readily connecting women in the Council Bluffs area to social reform. For example, Johnson highlighted peer role models for women such as Amelia Bloomer who had a "wide reputation as an able lecturer."<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, if readers did not care to join

in a social crusade, perhaps the *Bugle's* various advertisements for literary clubs in the community would catch their attention. These varying interests sometimes overlapped, as was the case when Bloomer addressed a literary association in Council Bluffs in October 1855.<sup>66</sup> That such events were regularly featured in Johnson's newspaper shows his interest in women's contributions to both local activities and national progressive movements.

Johnson also left the door open for less forward-thinking views on women to be expressed. An example is seen in a letter Johnson published that was only identified by the initial "G." The document was a response to the writer's assessment that Council Bluffs had become "a theater of much excitement" on the subject of women's rights.<sup>67</sup> The article stated that "no argument, in favor of women's voting, from any natural right that she possesses, is worthy of considering." G. stated that neither men nor women could claim political privileges, specifically voting, as a natural right. Men could vote and participate politically, but this power was exercised "for the purpose and object of preserving the domestic relation" to which women were better suited.<sup>68</sup> By not explaining why men deserved political power and women did not, the author implied that male competence and female dependence in this matter were not in question. Johnson often zealously scuttled opinions he disagreed with, but he offered no qualifying footnote to this confusing and condescending article.

At the same time that Johnson seemed to be calling for an equal place for women in public matters, he seemed to stand by as others argued for women to remain in a separate sphere. He believed that women had a duty as mothers to "inculcate" virtues in their children and teach them "to render themselves blessings to society," demonstrating "lofty heroism, and brave endurance" in motherhood.<sup>69</sup> Without this "home-influence" exerted with children at "the fireside," collective ruin lay in store. Idealizing women as by the hearth and burdened with complete responsibility for society's morality, Johnson was very much a product of his time.

As he prescribed moral improvement in the

community and nation, Johnson seemed to be pursuing recognition for Council Bluffs as a progressive city, but he was also often unwilling to break with convention. However, Johnson's social advocacy was still progressive and multifaceted, combining moral training of youth, temperance, and women's causes. The question remains as to how prominently Johnson figured in nineteenth-century progressivism on the western frontier. Nevertheless, in his sphere of influence and in every sense of the word, J. E. Johnson wanted to build Council Bluffs.

#### THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE BLUFFS

It has been established that Johnson reached out to potential settlers at the sacrifice of his own near-monopolies, inviting potential settlers to pursue the same profits. In addition to increasing the local population, these efforts occasionally served a more charitable purpose. At times, Johnson advocated for groups outside the city, such as immigrants and Native American tribes, demonstrating his concern for the welfare of disadvantaged groups in society.

When Johnson addressed "immigrants," he seems to be addressing multiple moving populations—*migrants*, or those looking to relocate within the United States, as well as foreign-born *immigrants*. Although Johnson called both immigrants, his calls for people to move westward seemed to cater specifically to foreign-born city dwellers and their families.

While the *Bugle* turned to an eastern audience for notice and approval, Johnson also criticized the crowded and polluted conditions of eastern metropolises. He contrasted them with the openness of western Iowa and adjacent lands in Nebraska, emphasizing their growing economic opportunities. Johnson's descriptions targeted all classes of migrants without distinction, but he spoke more specifically at other times. Many of his invitations did not target those who already lived in relative comfort but those trying to escape the cycle of poverty as "serfs" and "slaves" in the "great marts" of eastern corporations.<sup>70</sup> Rather than inviting people to experience adventure or luxury in the West, Johnson promised "tempo-



FIG. 7. This picture is actually a copy of a daguerreotype taken in an unknown location (see Joanna Cohan Scherer, "A Preponderance of Evidence: The 1852 Omaha Indian Delegation Daguerreotypes Recovered," *Nebraska History* 78, no. 3: 116–21). While the identification of the people in the portrait cannot be positively verified, this is certainly part of the delegation that Johnson took to Washington. The lone Caucasian may well be Johnson or Francis Wheeling or Henry W. Miller. Courtesy of Rochester Museum and Science Center, Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester, New York.

ral salvation to the dispirited and bowed-down" and a haven for the "most miserable" members of urban society.<sup>71</sup> In so doing, Johnson narrowed his appeal to a particular segment of the population—eastern city-dwellers in abject poverty, many of whom were known to be immigrants. In addition, Johnson rejected the Know-Nothing Party and the growing anti-immigration or nativist movement in the United States.<sup>72</sup> His repeated condemnation of discrimination against foreign-born immigrants in the East lends credence to the idea that he felt singular concern for them.

It is difficult to tell completely what motivated Johnson's efforts to reach out to eastern cities, but it seems unlikely that Johnson wanted to

exploit newcomers. Unlike eastern political machines, Johnson had no system in place to make immigrants dependent upon him for their basic needs. Instead, he encouraged them to consider the "great abundance of the choicest of lands" surrounding Council Bluffs that seemingly awaited "the arrival of the industrious poor, to make them bud and blossom into happy homes of plenty."<sup>73</sup> In another article directed toward working-class people in the East, Johnson published his opinion on providing land for the poor: "Why not try something for the good of humanity, especially when by judicious arrangement [landowners] can, by doing others good, do themselves good at the same time."<sup>74</sup> If anything,



FIG. 8. "Council Bluffs in 1858—Looking North," drawing by George Simons. Though typical enough as a frontier town in appearance, the consistent growth of the town and its prospects as a rail crossing on the Missouri River lifted Johnson's vision for its future to extraordinary heights. Courtesy of Council Bluffs Public Library.

Johnson was motivated by parallel desires to help himself, his community, and those in need.

In this light, Johnson's efforts to bring immigrants to Council Bluffs might very well have carried humanitarian undertones. Although Johnson might have overestimated the ability of working-class families to drop everything and trek across the continent, he did acknowledge their sufferings and seem willing to help. In Council Bluffs, immigrants could find productive sources of income by working the land, and thereby bolster local markets through their production. As long as new families were able to farm successfully, this process could have helped them to improve their state while also benefiting the local economy.

Johnson also reached out to help a disadvantaged group in society by devoting time and effort to better the situation of Native Americans around Council Bluffs. Johnson's journal affirms

that he felt great sympathy for members of the Omaha tribe with whom he had interacted for years as a storekeeper in their traditional lands, regretful for the privations caused by their relocation.<sup>75</sup> Working as an emissary for the Omaha tribe in 1851, Johnson helped organize a "wild west" traveling performance group to raise funds to send a delegation to Washington, DC, on the natives' behalf.<sup>76</sup> While touring northeast on the way to the capital, Johnson wrote the poem "The Indian Chief's Lament" to express his feelings for his native neighbors. In it he reproves the "sacriligious, powerful race" of white settlers that destroyed the buffalo and confined tribes to live on "sterile sand."<sup>77</sup> Johnson's expedition with the Omaha culminated in a visit to President Millard Fillmore, who "as a good man, sympathized with their miseries," as Johnson's diary relates.<sup>78</sup> After six months away from home, the U.S. government awarded the tribe a grant of \$25,000 and

agreed upon a new treaty.<sup>79</sup> This vignette illustrates how Johnson both felt concern and acted in behalf of socially and economically disadvantaged groups, willing to advocate their cause at great personal sacrifice.

While Johnson's humanitarian notions did not extend very far toward hotter political issues, such as the cause of American slaves, he can be credited for acting on his good intentions at other times. It is also likely that in some respects his "wild west" tour furthered stereotypes about the supposed wildness of Native Americans,<sup>80</sup> but he still helped them win a measure of financial support. He seems to have overlooked some of the needs around him, but this should not overshadow his support for immigrants and Native Americans.

#### OF COUNCIL BLUFFS AND QUEEN CITIES

Johnson was restless—not to change his personal situation but to change the status quo—and he was determined to usher in the progress that he foresaw for his community and nation, committing his time and resources. That being said, perhaps it seems strange that a man who so strongly advocated the development of a town on the frontier should leave it so soon. Even though he was one of the earliest white settlers in southwestern Iowa, Johnson was unable to live the life overlooking the prairie that he so often idealized for those who read his newspapers, moving across Nebraska in 1857 and then farther still in 1860. The path of Johnson's life westward across the United States signifies a journey influenced by the effects of religious difference as well as anxiousness for political and social change.<sup>81</sup> As an individual, he embodied singular progressiveness.

In considering the improvements that J. E. Johnson wished for Council Bluffs' future, it is clear that his urban vision bordered on fantasy, but on the other hand, some of his predictions did take place. In 1855 he stated that a railroad spanning the American continent would pass through Council Bluffs, outlining the basic route it would follow along the Platte River through Nebraska.<sup>82</sup> He was right. However, Johnson was not one to simply make a grandiose predic-

tion, but he worked to make it a reality, as he did in other endeavors, printing invitations for rail companies to build lines to Council Bluffs, as mentioned. It is unclear how great an influence Johnson's advertisements and supportive articles had, but they clearly demonstrate a long-term commitment to Council Bluffs. And even if he was wrong about that city, Johnson figures prominently in Omaha's growth by helping to bring the railroad to its neighbor across the river.

While his promotion of the frontier identifies him within the company of contemporary boosters in the mid-nineteenth century, Johnson figures as a unique voice for meaningful, multifaceted progress within the choir. He worked to build Council Bluffs to exemplify social vibrancy, moral uprightness, and economic competitiveness. And when he moved west, he left behind a town that had grown in each of these ways. Not only had the population grown as Johnson wanted, being a good frontier booster, but businesses had also multiplied and railroads had finally arrived. Johnson's publicity efforts as editor of the *Council Bluffs Bugle* likely aided these changes.

Though far from infallible, Johnson made an undeniable impact upon western Iowa and Nebraska, not by launching the region into the limelight as he envisioned, perhaps, but by fueling sentiment that a bright future lay ahead on this segment of the frontier. This feeling is fairly summarized in a front-page article published in the *Bugle* at the beginning of 1855. It announced that "Iowa is the centre of interest and attraction to all those enterprising and restless spirits who are dissatisfied with older societies and anxious, to seek a home whose future is bright with promise."<sup>83</sup> Though unique in many ways, Johnson by holding this view fits comfortably within the western movement of the time, a time when ordinary people looked out over fields and wagon-rutted roads and imagined wondrous things rising up.

#### NOTES

1. Harrison Johnson, an early Nebraska historian, believed news editors were "important public servants, with grave responsibilities," and that "not even the great corporations . . . not even the governing men and

statesmen . . . wielded a greater influence for the prosperity and importance of the State” than newspapers. *Johnson's History of Nebraska* (Omaha: Henry Gibson, 1880), 176. See also Benjamin Pfeiffer, “The Role of Joseph E. Johnson and his Pioneer Newspapers in the Development of Territorial Nebraska,” *Nebraska History* 40, no. 2 (June 1959): 125–26. Sally Foreman Griffith argues more modestly for news editors’ influence. The public roles of editors can all be applied to J. E. Johnson but especially representing the local business community and supporting its development; promoting community events; maintaining wide networks of connections in journalism, economics, and politics; and mediating between the local community and the outside world *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4. She highlights these aspects in William Allen White, but he did not publish his first paper until 1895, so J. E. Johnson may prove more representative of her nineteenth-century model in some ways.

2. Charlyne Berens and Nancy Mitchell, “Parallel Tracks, Same Terminus: The Role of Nineteenth-Century Newspapers and Railroads in the Settlement of Nebraska,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 289–90. This same page also makes anonymous reference to an 1854 advertisement for Nebraska land in the *Omaha Arrow* made by none other than Joseph E. Johnson, who also edited that paper.

3. David M. Emmons believes that nineteenth-century Americans saw local newspapers as being free from vested interests, a third party that did not benefit directly from settlement as railroad companies and immigration boards did. See Emmons, *Garden in the Grasslands: Boomer Literature of the Central Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 64. Whether this was the case, though, they often pushed the limits of exaggeration in describing their respective towns. If lacking sound evidence to back their future visions, some promoters justified their misrepresentation from economic necessity, assuming that prospective settlers had no other source of information. See Karen De Bres, “Come to the ‘Champagne Air’: Changing Promotional Images of the Kansas Climate, 1854–1900,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Spring 2003): 118. But as De Bres indicates, news editors often tried a more measured approach of admitting a shortcoming and then trying to overcome it “scientifically” with maps and tables to spin things once more in their favor. This is described as a later stage of promotional literature in the 1870s, however, and it does not seem to manifest itself in Johnson’s writings. See also Jan Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise: Advertising the Texas Panhandle and*

*South Plains, 1870–1917* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 13. Blodgett points out the wishful thinking that promoters, especially news editors, leaned on to justify bold predictions of growth.

4. Berens and Mitchell, “Parallel Tracks, Same Terminus,” 290–91.

5. See Jan Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise*, 12–13. The author argues that local newspapers in rural Texas before 1890 wanted an increased population to enliven the community socially and stabilize the economy in the long term. This generalization indicates that Johnson’s focus on broader social and economic development was not totally unique, although Blodgett’s work generally focuses on the end of the frontier period.

6. Rufus D. Johnson, *J.E.J., Trail to Sundown, Casadaga to Casa Grande, 1817–1882: The Story of a Pioneer: Joseph Ellis Johnson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1961), 193–96. In November 1853 a fire in Council Bluffs consumed Johnson’s printing office, accounting for some gaps in printing. An excerpt of the *Fairfield (Iowa) Ledger*, written six weeks after the fire in Council Bluffs, praises Johnson for printing a “small Bugle” so soon after the disaster. Based upon this, it would seem that Johnson might not have been held back for long, but full issues were longer in coming—the issue for January 5, 1855, is the next that we could find.

7. Horace E. Deemer, chief justice of Iowa’s Supreme Court in the early twentieth century, referred to Johnson as “the most versatile and ubiquitous and probably the most unique figure of Nebraska journalism.” “The Part of Iowa Men in the Organization of Nebraska,” *Annals of Iowa* 9, no. 3 (October 1909): 167. Similarly, historian Benjamin Pfeiffer commented in 1959: “Of all the early Nebraska journalists none were more colorful or individualistic than Joseph Ellis Johnson.” Pfeiffer concluded that due to the “imprint of his character and personality on the pioneer communities of territorial Nebraska,” in only three years of active editing there, Johnson “must be ranked . . . as one of Nebraska’s outstanding territorial journalists” (120–21). Pfeiffer offers a fair analysis of Johnson’s role as a public figure but neglects his influence in Iowa.

8. R. D. Johnson, *J.E.J.*, 456. This book contains the short autobiography that J. E. Johnson wrote in 1882.

9. *Ibid.*, 106. Before the town’s name was changed on February 9, 1853, the paper was entitled the *Western Bugle* and was run by Almon W. Babbitt. Soon after the change, Johnson was given editorial responsibilities and the paper was renamed.

10. Deemer, “The Part of Iowa Men,” 167. See also Joseph E. Johnson’s issues for the *Council Bluffs Bugle*,

January 26, and February 6, 1855. Placing the capital directly across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs benefited Johnson's investments in both places, as the closeness of the two cities linked them in their developing importance.

11. R. D. Johnson, *J.E.J.*, 456–57.
12. Dexter C. Bloomer, "Notes on the History of Pottawattamie County," *Annals of Iowa* 10, no. 3 (July 1872): 177–78.
13. *Ibid.*, 178.
14. See R. D. Johnson, *J.E.J.*, 324–470 (especially 456–57).
15. Joseph E. Johnson, "Thoughts and Observations," *Council Bluffs Bugle*, May 1, 1855, p. 2.
16. De Bres, "Come to the 'Champagne Air,'" 114; also Emmons, *Garden in the Grassland*, 64–67; and Blodgett, *Land of Bright Promise*, 4.
17. J. E. Johnson, "Editor's Sanctum—Publication Day," *Bugle*, April 6, 1855, p. 2.
18. "The Bugle," copied from *The Pioneer* in J. E. Johnson, *Bugle*, February 13, 1855, p. 1.
19. Nathan Howe Parker, *Iowa as It Is in 1855: A Gazetteer for Citizens, and a Handbook for Immigrants . . .* (Chicago: Keen and Lee, 1855), 186, *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/Sabin?af=RN&ae=CY3802334118&srcht=a&ste=14>.
20. Nathan H. Parker, correspondence printed in the *Bugle*, November 6, 1855, p. 2.
21. J. E. Johnson, "Copy," *Bugle*, April 20, 1855, p. 2.
22. J. E. Johnson, *Bugle*, May 1, 1855, p. 3.
23. J. E. Johnson, "Obituary," *Bugle*, April 20, 1855, p. 2. The report indicated that Clark died on April 16.
24. J. E. Johnson, "May Day," *Bugle*, May 1, 1855, p. 3.
25. J. E. Johnson, "Thoughts and Observations," *Bugle*, May 1, 1855, p. 2.
26. J. E. Johnson, "River News," *Bugle*, May 1, 1855, p. 3. Johnson's use of the pronoun "we" might also indicate a desire to connect with townspeople. However, it might also have been used in the sense of the "royal we" that seems to have been a fairly common style for writers of the time (see quotations from notes 12, 14, and 51).
27. Charles H. Babbitt, *Early Days at Council Bluffs* (Washington, DC: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1916; reprint, Marceline, MO: Walsworth, 1975), 89.
28. Esther M. LeBaron to Hannah Johnson, April 26, year unknown, Register of the Papers of Joseph Ellis Johnson, Special Collections Department, University of Utah Libraries, Salt Lake City, 68.

29. R. D. Johnson, *J.E.J.*, 479–512 and 61. Participating in the practice of polygamy that existed among early Mormons (members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Johnson had three wives and nine children to support by the time he left Council Bluffs for Utah in 1859.

30. *Ibid.*, 352. R. D. Johnson notes that a highly publicized trial of J. E. Johnson's practice of polygamy in 1859–60 was the major reason for his decision to leave Council Bluffs, rather than the polygamy itself, which R. D. Johnson claims was already "common knowledge" on which his political enemies capitalized (312–14). Indeed, political motives (the Civil War and "the Republican reign of terror") appear to have driven Johnson from the Plains entirely in 1860, as reported by the *Huntsman's Echo* (352). However, Pfeiffer argues that Johnson left first to escape religious persecution and second political disfavor. "The Role of Joseph E. Johnson," 124–25. Before then, Johnson had continued at least some of his business endeavors in Council Bluffs after leaving for a stint in Crescent City in 1857 and perhaps even after his move to Wood River in 1859. In any case, both Pfeiffer and R. D. Johnson state that Joseph Johnson returned to Council Bluffs in 1859 to answer the charges against him.

31. *Ibid.*, 353.
32. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965) 115–22.
33. *Ibid.*, 149.
34. *Ibid.*, 196.
35. B.P.R., "Sketches of Iowa, No. 1," *Council Bluffs Bugle*, January 12, 1855, p. 1.
36. J. E. Johnson, "Council Bluffs," Western Iowa section, *Bugle*, November 27, 1855, p. 2. John Myers Myers notes that once an editor had named a town site a future metropolis, he continued treating it as though its future success were already secured. *Print in a Wild Land* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 46–49, 60.
37. J. E. Johnson, "City Improving," *Bugle*, April 20, 1855, p. 2.
38. *Ibid.*
39. J. E. Johnson, "Up Country," *Bugle*, February 23, 1855, p. 2.
40. L. O. Littlefield, "To Friends East: Letter No. 1," *Bugle*, November 13, 1855.
41. J. E. Johnson, "Pacific Railroad: Continued," *Bugle*, December 21, 1853, p. 1. Johnson pushed continuously for Council Bluffs to be included in the network of railroads, especially by those aiming to form part of a transcontinental line. Two months before this issue the *Bugle* prominently displayed the *New York Railroad Journal's* endorsement of building the anti-

pated line through Iowa. "Lyons, Iowa, Central Railroad," September 21, 1853, p. 2.

42. J. E. Johnson, "Advance in Property," *Bugle*, February 5, 1856, p. 3.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. J. E. Johnson, "Kansas and Nebraska: Relative Geography Advantages and Inducements to Settlers," *Bugle*, May 1, 1855, p. 2.

46. J. E. Johnson, "Ladies' Supper," *Bugle*, February 13, 1855, p. 2.

47. J. E. Johnson, "Agricultural Meeting," *Bugle*, March 2, 1855, p. 2.

48. J. E. Johnson, *Bugle*, April, 24, 1855, p. 2.

49. J. E. Johnson, *Bugle*, "The Washington Festival," February 20, 1855, p. 2; "Printers' Festival," January 9, 1855, p. 2; and "Pioneer's Festival," April 27, 1855, p. 2.

50. Johnson's display of social activities might very well have been meant as a means of boosterism in itself, in addition to local publicizing. Blodgett notes that commercial clubs in rural Texas towns advertised social events in local newspapers as a way of attracting farmers and railroads to the area around the turn of the century. *Land of Bright Promise*, 22.

51. J. E. Johnson, "Agreeable," *Bugle*, February 2, 1855, p. 2.

52. J. E. Johnson, "A Formidable Undertaking," *Bugle*, February 17, 1855, p. 4.

53. Johnson would have expressed his point accurately had he suggested that the hypothetical person chew a little over four inches of tobacco per day, rather than two inches.

54. J. E. Johnson, "Music," *Bugle*, November 27, 1855, p. 2.

55. J. E. Johnson, "Schools," *Bugle*, February 5, 1856, p. 3.

56. J. E. Johnson, "Important and Alarming Freesoil Movement.—What shall be done?" *Bugle*, April 27, 1855, p. 2.

57. J. E. Johnson, "Kansas," *Bugle*, January 22, 1856, p. 2.

58. J. E. Johnson, "Main [sic] Law for Iowa," *Bugle*, January 26, 1855, p. 3.

59. J. E. Johnson, "Temperance Lecture," *Bugle*, January 16, 1855, p. 3.

60. J. E. Johnson, "Found Dead," *Bugle*, March 20, 1855, p. 3.

61. J. E. Johnson, "Boys—Boys," *Bugle*, February 9, 1855, p. 2.

62. J. E. Johnson, *Bugle*, April 27, 1855, p. 2.

63. J. E. Johnson, "Woman's Cause Progressing," *Bugle*, June 19, 1855, p. 2. This was the same Mrs. Bloomer whose suggested women's fashion of baggy pants, or "bloomers," became a popular object of ridicule, but eventually gained some acceptance in styles of women's athletic pants in the decades afterward.

64. *Ibid.*

65. J. E. Johnson, "Thanksgiving—A Lecture from Mrs. Bloomer," *Bugle*, November 20, 1855, p. 2.

66. J. E. Johnson, "Council Bluffs Literary Association," *Bugle*, October 23, 1855, p. 2.

67. G., letter to J. E. Johnson, "Women's Rights," *Bugle*, December 25, 1855, p. 2.

68. *Ibid.*

69. J. E. Johnson, "An Old Fashioned Mother," *Bugle*, December 25, 1855, p. 3.

70. J. E. Johnson, "Laborers Hungry—Mechanics Idle—People Starving and Homeless," *Bugle*, August 14, 1855, p. 2.

71. *Ibid.*

72. See J. E. Johnson, "A Smart Fellow" on p. 2, "Long Faced Hypocrites" on p. 5, and "Signs of the Times" and "A Scene in Louisville" on p. 6, all in *Bugle*, October 2, 1855, as well as "Know-nothingism" and "Iniquity of Know Nothingism," December 4, 1855, p. 1, for a sample of the editor's sentiments.

73. J. E. Johnson, "Up Country," *Bugle*, February 23, 1855, p. 2.

74. John Taylor, "Why Don't the People Go out West!," *The Mormon*, copied in the *Bugle*, March 27, 1855, p. 2.

75. J. E. Johnson's personal diary no. 2, p. 11 (January 1–March 30, September 19–October 8, 1852), Register of the Papers of Joseph Ellis Johnson, Special Collections Department, University of Utah Libraries, Salt Lake City.

76. R. D. Johnson, *J.E.J.*, 157.

77. *Ibid.*, 166–67.

78. Quoted in *ibid.*, 177.

79. *Ibid.*, 180–81.

80. J. E. Johnson's personal diary no. 2, p. 11. "Wild West Indian Show" posters promised war, wedding, harvest, hunting, scalping, and worship.

81. See notes 29 and 30.

82. J. E. Johnson, "Pacific Railroad: Continued," *Bugle*, December 21, 1853, p. 2.

83. B.P.R., "Sketches of Iowa, No. 1."