Charles Allen Culberson (1855-1925) was attorney general of Texas for two terms (1891-1895), governor for two terms (1895-1899), and United States Senator from Texas for four terms (1899-1923). His thirty-two years of public service started with his election as attorney general at the time when the agrarian revolt was reaching its greatest strength in Texas. He suffered his first political defeat when he failed to gain election to a fifth Senate term in 1922.

Briefly, those facts outline the political life of Charles Allen Culberson, and they are the facts usually related in any mention that is made of him. Added, in many cases, is a statement that Culberson gained public office with the sponsorship of James Stephen Hogg and with Hogg's support moved up to the governorship to succeed Hogg. As governor, he carried out Hogg's policies. Most accounts stop there. One historian said that Hogg left office in 1895 and "no very important events affecting the State have transpired during the period since ..."1 Another said that Culberson was always Hogg's "right-hand man."2 Yet another explained that Culberson "was ... handed the governorship by Hogg."3 Joe B. Frantz observed that the people of Texas "knew that whoever might be governor or senator in Texas—in 1897 it was Charles Culberson—Jim Hogg would run the state and that dilettante named Colonel House would choose the winners."4

Culberson was not molded in the image of Hogg. He began his career in public office independently in 1880 when he was elected county attorney in his home county of Marion at the age of twenty-five.5 Culberson does not mention that office in the "Personal Reminiscences" he wrote for publication in Texas newspapers during 1923-1924, but he held the office only a short time. He resigned it to devote himself to his newly-begun law practice in Jefferson, where he had joined his father's firm, Culberson and Armistead, after graduating from the University of Virginia in 1877.

The son of David Browning Culberson and Eugenia Kimball Culberson, Charles A. Culberson had been brought to Texas a year after his birth, on June 10, 1855, in Dadeville, Alabama. His father was a young lawyer then, having read law in the office of Alabama Supreme Court Justice William P. Chilton.6 Charles attended public schools in Jefferson, Professor Morgan H. Looney's private high school in Gilmer, and Virginia Military Institute before going to the University of Virginia to study law. Charles' father was, by 1877 when the son joined him in his Jefferson law practice, prominent in Texas politics. He had been elected to the United States Congress in 1875, and served ten consecutive terms until 1897.7

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Both were born and reared in Jefferson, Texas, accounting in part for their interest in Culberson.
The city in which Congressman and Mrs. Culberson reared their family was one of the most cosmopolitan in the South. Culberson's brother, Robert U. Culberson, said that he remembered Culberson's coming home from V.M.I., handsome in his cadet's uniform, doing the things most young men enjoy doing—taking a drink now and then and playing an occasional game of poker with friends.

Culberson once said that if he had any claim to fame, it was for his early law practice. He was proudest of the 1882 LeGrand Case. His skillful handling of that case won him a wide and favorable reputation as a lawyer. Israel LeGrand was convicted of murder by the Federal District Court at Jefferson in a Ku Klux Klan type of incident prosecuted under an 1871 Reconstruction measure. Culberson appealed to the Circuit Court and had the conviction reversed on the grounds that the law under which the conviction had been ruled was unconstitutional. His view ultimately was upheld by the United States Supreme Court.

Perhaps because of the LeGrand case and accompanying notoriety, Culberson was offered nomination to the Texas Legislature in 1882, but declined. Instead, he made his first move in state politics in 1886, and it was a cautious move. In that year the "Tyler gang" hoped to unite the factions of the Democratic Party to get James Stephen Hogg elected attorney general. Culberson indicated interest in the office, even announced that he would run, but he withdrew before the nominating convention. Shortly after his withdrawal, Hogg came forward with his candidacy for the office. One historian said that Culberson withdrew "apparently with a promise of future support from [Horace] Chilton and Hogg." Since Culberson was from Jefferson and Hogg from Tyler, both in the populous and long politically powerful East Texas area, their running against each other would have split an important part of the Democratic vote. Possibly looking ahead to a means of avoiding such a predicament in the future, Culberson moved to Dallas in 1887.

Before moving to Dallas, Culberson married Sally Harrison, daughter of Col. William M. Harrison and Elizabeth Ann Epperson. In Dallas he formed a partnership with John Bookhout, Bookhout and Culberson, to practice law.

In 1888, Culberson made his first bid for attention of the state Democracy. At the State Democratic Convention in Fort Worth in May of that year, delegates were split wide open over the prohibition issue. A constitutional amendment to provide prohibition in Texas had been submitted to the people and soundly defeated in 1887. The anti-prohibitionists were gloating over their victory on the constitutional amendment and determined to oust the prohibitionists from any further party activity. To that end, they wanted a plank included in the platform. Some conservatives among the anti-prohibitionists, including Culberson, opposed such a plank. Culberson was on the platform committee, which argued the issue so long that the convention became noisily impatient. Finally Culberson announced that the committee's report would be forthcoming soon. That eased the tension in the hall. Smiling, he then withdrew to help finish the work on the platform. James William Madden, when recalling the incident, said he thought "he was as fine a looking specimen of physical manhood as I had ever seen. A handsome fellow, with high flowing forehead, standing as erect as an Indian, hair dark and partially curly, neatly dressed, and with a military bearing..." Culberson's announcement meant that the controversial plank was out: throughout the rest of the convention, harmony prevailed. Culberson had made "his hit."

When the Democratic Party assembled in convention two years later, it nominated Culberson for the attorney generalship. Hogg had won the hearts of the great masses of Texas voters by his vigorous activities as attorney general and his promise that if he were elected governor in 1890 he would get a railroad commission, among other things, to bring big business under state control. He had effectively used the Texas
antitrust act of 1889 to attack abuses such as restricting trade, limiting production, and controlling prices.

Hogg was the Democratic Party's answer to pressure, partly from the Farmers' Alliance, to get government regulation of the railroads. The plan worked; the Alliance did endorse Hogg and the proposed railroad commission. Alliance men undoubtedly helped Hogg to win in 1890. Many Alliance men, however, did not go for Hogg. It was only sensible, really, for Hogg to meet farm demands, as Culberson did during his public life, because in 1890 Texas was still more than 84 per cent rural with 64 per cent of its people engaged in agricultural pursuits. Hogg's biographer thought it clear that Hogg's great service to the Democracy of Texas was his making it a party of reform, a party which would meet the people's demands and thereby delay the advent of a third party. He delayed but did not prevent it; Culberson had to contend with the third party when it was his turn to run for governor.

Early in 1890, Hogg visited Culberson in Dallas. Culberson later said that Hogg was not too enthusiastic about his running for attorney general but that since Culberson openly advocated the railroad commission, Hogg "had no objection to seeing him elected." Culberson made "the best race and showed the cleanest pair of heels of anyone..." He made a record during the campaign that will place him more plainly before the people... I consider him the most promising man of the state..." So commented a newspaper writer who covered Culberson's talks.

At the nominating convention in 1890, Culberson, without opposition, was nominated by acclamation.

Did Culberson get the attorney generalship because of Hogg's backing? Some say he did. He was "personally chosen for this place by Hogg," one writer said. Another said that he was "swept into office with Hogg." Another thought that "it was the brain power of these two men that brought about reforms..." Others thought a major advantage for Culberson was the fact that his father was David Browning Culberson. "He owed much, no doubt, to the popularity of his father, who was becoming one of the Democratic leaders in Congress..." Those same writers, however, added that "the son was winning success also on his own merits."

John W. Maddox, evidently a political enemy, made the point clearly in a pamphlet distributed during the 1894 campaign for governor: "...little Ford Fauntleroy is not a Hogg. He is a handsome young man with a good opinion of himself..." It would be "a most egregious blunder were he to mistake Little Ford Fauntleroy for a Hogg."

In both Hogg and Culberson, the movement for reform found reflection in the turn to youth on the part of the Democratic Party. Culberson was thirty-five years old when he ran for the attorney generalship. The convention that year was worthy of newspaper comment because of the large numbers of youthful delegates.

Up to the point when he became attorney general of Texas, Culberson could hardly have been said to be dependent upon Hogg for his successes in any field, including position in the Democratic Party. If anything, Hogg was indebted to Culberson. Culberson had withdrawn from nomination to the legislature in 1882 for reasons unknown and in 1886 had backed out of the attorney general's race in order not to interfere with Hogg's plans for the same office. When Hogg ran for governor in 1890, he did not go out of his way to promote Culberson's candidacy for attorney-general—but Culberson won, perhaps partly because many people voting for Hogg automatically voted for the man who was on the same ticket, but not because of any great effort on Hogg's part in his behalf. The vote for Culberson was 260,864. His closest opponent, the Republican J. P. Hague, got 76,401.
Culperson and Hogg were in agreement, as indicated, on the subject of the railroad commission. They were also, as indicated, young reformers anxious to meet the demands of the people. Naturally they worked in harmony to achieve the reform goals. Culperson was very unlike Hogg, however, in practically every other way. He certainly was not a "shadow" of Hogg.

Hogg's father had been active in Texas politics during the days of the Republic and had an officer for the Confederacy during the Civil War. He died in 1862 while on active duty. Hogg's mother died the following year, so that Hogg became an orphan at the age of twelve. He attended local schools in East Texas and while visiting in Alabama, attended a school there. In 1866 he began to work part-time in the Rusk newspaper office. In 1867, he became a full-time printers' devil. At age sixteen, he was entirely on his own. As he grew physically, he also developed his mind through newspaper work. Newspapers were then devoted largely to politics, as political vehicles. Hogg naturally learned a lot about politics through observing his editor and setting news in type.

Hogg had little formal school, little experience with haute couture, little help toward financial independence. He did it all for himself, so it is not surprising that he should have emerged into adulthood with enough rough edges to arouse sympathy in the rough-edged Texan whose votes Hogg sought.

Culperson, on the other hand, had as fine an education as the United States offered. He went through no "starvation period," no apprenticeship, but "arrived" at an early age in his chosen profession, that of an attorney. Contemporaries recognized the fact that he started life with the traditional "silver spoon in his mouth." A series of 1921 cartoons depicting stages in Culperson's life showed, to illustrate his childhood, a neatly-dressed little boy standing in front of a pillared colonial mansion and being helped on with his coat by a woman wearing an apron. The line beneath the cartoon: "Scion of a wealthy and cultured family... every wish granted."

Culperson "won men and women by his courtliness..." He was "polished, a student, an organizer, and ever sure of himself," a contemporary wrote. Another said that he entered public life "dowered with gifts and advantages few young men have ever possessed" including "a most attractive and impressive personality." Another said that Culperson "has the easy port and bearing of a polished gentleman, and in social intercourse is affable and engaging..." Yet another mentioned the fact that "the elegant" Charles A. Culperson, "one of the new stars in Texas politics" in 1890, visited Gainesville September 25 and was "charming, gracious, and suave..."

George W. Bailey, writing in the Houston Post March 20, 1925, on the occasion of Culperson's death, said that Culperson "offers contrast with James Stephen Hogg, whom he succeeded... Hogg was the last of the older school of bewhiskered governors; Culperson was the first of the younger, smooth-shaven statesmen." As a matter of fact, Hogg was only four years older than Culperson.

Edward Mandell House, who was Culperson's campaign manager in 1894, 1896, and 1898, said that Hogg "did not have the fine, analytical mind that Culperson has, but he possessed a force, vision, and courage..." Hogg himself, in a speech at Rockdale October 1, 1894, referred to Culperson as the "sterling, chivalrous, intellectual..." Culperson, another wrote, "was a pleasing and effective speaker, and all his efforts showed care, deliberation and preparation in their accuracy and scholarly finish; he was prepossessing and handsome... a faultless dresser..."

This man Culperson, who became attorney general under Hogg, was no helpless nobody who had to depend on Hogg for standing. He did, as attorney general, play a
key role in implementing the goals of reform Hogg had promised the people—the railroad commission, a stocks and bonds law, land reclamation suits, and legal action necessary to make all reform legislation effective.

In 1892, Culberson wrote to a friend saying that he was not participating in the governor's race in any way, taking no sides. Perhaps Hogg thought that he should have. In any case, both Hogg and Culberson were re-elected in 1892 and continued their work together until 1895, when Hogg left the governorship and retired to private law practice. Hogg, one authority said, "made it plain that he intended to support the venerable John H. Reagan to succeed him." 52

There was temporary break in the good relationships between Hogg and Culberson because Hogg did not give Culberson the support Culberson thought had been promised him. When Hogg appointed Reagan to the Railroad Commission in 1891, Reagan resigned his seat in the United States Senate to accept the appointment to the commission. That made it possible for Hogg to appoint his long-time Tyler friend, Horace Chilton, to the vacated Senate seat, which he did. 53 As the election year of 1894 approached, opposition to "Hoggism" included criticism of Hogg's giving his friend Chilton the Senate seat. Support grew for moving Roger Q. Mills up from the House of Representatives, where he had represented Texas since 1873, to the Senate. Hogg could still keep Chilton in the Senate, but at that point David B. Culberson let it be known that he wanted to run for the seat to be vacated by Richard Coke. Charles Culberson went to Washington and talked things over with his father, explaining what Hogg had in mind. He sent a telegram to Edward M. House saying that his father had agreed not to run in opposition to Chilton, but that Hogg and Chilton "would be expected" to help Charles in the race for governor. House later said that the whole misunderstanding was Culberson's fault because "he was always so independent..." 54

The anti-Culberson pamphleteer, John W. Maddox, analyzed the situation:

It must not be forgotten that Grand Old Dave, whom all Texas delights to honor, is the father of this handsome boy; and it is not to his discredit that, mindful of his preferment, he retires from an eminently useful public career that he may not endanger the success of his son's gubernatorial ambition. And if he does not stand aloof too long in the interest of Little Ford Fauntleroy, he should succeed Richard Coke in the United States Senate, but he must not watch the Little Lord's fight to the finish and then trip Horace Chilton. 55

In an undated letter to James William Madden, Culberson said that Reagan supported him for governor at first, but "after the campaign progressed to some extent, Judge Reagan was requested by a number of people to enter the race. He declined to do so..." 56 Reagan had made similar commitments to S.W.T. Lanham and John H. Cochran, also contenders for the nomination for governor, but when those two released Reagan from the pledge, Culberson did the same. 57 That left the main race between Culberson and Reagan. Reagan, seventy-six years old, had a long and prestigious record and long-established followers to support him. Frank Andrews, who assisted Edward M. House in managing Culberson's campaign, thought Reagan would be a real threat. 58

One of Culberson's campaign workers suggested that a speaker might dwell lightly on the fact that "Judge Reagan said emphatically and unequivocally to Culberson that he would not be a candidate, or 'I will do nothing to embarrass your candidacy.' Running against a man is liable to 'embarrass his candidacy.' " 59

Hogg thought Culberson's stand on the silver question would drive many Democrats to the Populists, so he assured Reagan of his support. 60 Both Hogg and Reagan
favored free and unlimited coinage of silver. Culberson favored coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1 provided this could be done while maintaining silver at a parity with gold. The show-down would come at the nominating convention. By that time, with the fine organization worked out by House, Andrews, and Culberson, the Culberson delegates were in a majority. House later told of how he and Culberson sat in one room at the Windsor Hotel in Dallas with Hogg, Reagan, and L. L. Foster down the hall in another room. Hogg tried to mediate the positions of the opposing two, the negotiations extending from morning until late afternoon, with no success. Meanwhile, the platform committee, dominated by George Clark and his supporters, brought in a platform that neither Reagan nor Culberson favored, maintaining the national Democratic Convention silver plank of 1892. Reagan had borne down so heavily on the free silver issue in his campaign that he thought it would make him look ridiculous to accept nomination on such a platform, so the next day he withdrew from the race. It was Reagan's first political defeat in forty-five years. One authority said that Reagan withdrew only after House persuaded Hogg to reason with Reagan, and Hogg did, explaining that only Reagan's withdrawal could prevent a split in the liberal forces. Reagan's withdrawal paved the way for Culberson's nomination. He was nominated on the first ballot after the convention agreed to a resolution adopting majority rule as a means of nominating. Culberson said that he got a two-thirds majority vote, so the maneuvering to assure that he would win by scrapping the old two-thirds rule was wasted. One historian said that adoption of the majority rule was what settled the nomination, regardless of Reagan's withdrawal, because the Culberson forces had a clear majority in the convention.

Only a short time before the nominating convention, Hogg made his first open move of support for Culberson. He had, as a matter of fact, traveled during most of the campaign, removing himself from the need to be active in work for any candidate.

The *Dallas Morning News*, editorially anti-Hogg and delighted that Hogg was leaving public office, commented later:

> It is no secret that Hogg promised to stand by the old man [Reagan] to the bitter end and to secure the nomination for him. The gang was powerful and Hogg was supreme in its councils. The Culberson hokey-poky-harmony young democracy ox-cart came along and the Hoggites were among the first to get aboard. Reagan was left out in the cold. The excuse was that his nomination would have been offensive to the recently harmonized sound money men, to whom some concessions had been made. The truth was... that Hogg could still play first fiddle if the young Christian [Culberson] was selected, while he would have to sing low from a back seat in case of the nomination of Reagan...

With the backing of Hogg, Reagan, and United States Senator Horace Chilton, Culberson won in the November election despite one of the wildest splits of the electorate ever. There were Democrats, Populists, "Regular" Republicans, Prohibitionists, and "Reform" Republicans all in the race. The Populists made a powerful showing, their candidate getting 159,676 votes to Culberson's 216,373. One writer said that Culberson got only sixty-four votes more than Thomas L. Nugent, the Populist candidate, but perhaps that writer was a Populist. That was the year that the Populists sent two representatives to Congress from Texas, which showed the extent of dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party's policies.

House recalled later that Culberson paid the entire fifteen hundred dollars the campaign cost. "He refused to permit anyone to contribute toward futhering his selec-
tion as the party’s candidate, although it took practically all of his small savings to meet the costs.” Frank Andrews wrote a friend during the campaign: “We are poor as church mice here.” Culberson, however, wrote identical letters to a number of people on October 18, 1894, telling them that he did not know that the secretary of the State Democratic Executive Committee had sent out requests for campaign donations. He said that if he had been consulted, “I would have insisted that you and others similarly situated should have been left to your own voluntary action...” That seems to indicate that he wanted help if anyone wanted to give it.

After Culberson’s election, Hogg joined in honoring the victor, he and Culberson remained personal friends, and Culberson threw a few legal-fee plums Hogg’s way during the time he was governor. Culberson’s first inaugural address January 15, 1895, contained high praise for Hogg. Hogg did not play first fiddle, or even second fiddle, during Culberson’s administrations as governor. Hogg stayed busy with private practice and Culberson went his own way as governor, carrying on many policies initiated by Hogg and introducing reforms on his own to the extent that he became known as “the young Christian governor.”

One of the first things Culberson did as governor was to appoint his erstwhile opponent, Reagan, to the Railroad Commission, of which Reagan had been chairman by appointment from Hogg. Culberson explained that no one could so well serve the interests of Texas in that job as Reagan.

Upon completion of his two terms as governor, Culberson challenged Roger Q. Mills for the Senate and won. House, with Frank Andrews’ help again, managed the campaign, which was so effective that Mills withdrew and left Culberson the uncontested Democratic nominee upon whom the Legislature voted in January, 1899. Culberson was chosen unanimously by the Senate; there were two dissenting votes in the House. Culberson was re-elected to the Senate in 1904, 1910, and 1916, in those cases by vote of the people rather than by the Legislature.

Reagan had also started out running for the Senate post in 1898, and Culberson thought that Hogg backed Reagan. Reagan withdrew even before Mills, and Hogg made the statement: “You may say that I am for Governor Culberson this year and for Senator Chilton two years from now.” Hogg supported Martin M. Crane for governor but House, who was managing Culberson’s campaign for the Senate, also ran the campaign of Joseph Sayers for governor, and Sayers won. Culberson also backed Crane.

Culberson moved on from the governorship to an almost record-breaking term of service for the state in the United States Senate. The fact that it is difficult to find anything startling or surprising in his record may be the secret of his success. When scandals broke around many of the Senators accused of being in league with powerful interests, Culberson’s name was never mentioned. Culberson weathered party splits and personality differences until 1922, when he was ill and old and openly asserted his opposition to the Ku Klux Klan, as he openly asserted his opposition to issues all through his career when he felt that something was a matter of principle. A recent writer said that the Democrats, in the Senatorial race of 1916, “had to opt for a politician whose loyalty to dry progressivism was doubtful. As state attorney general, governor, and senator, Charles Culberson turned silence into a settled habit and rarely revealed his convictions.” Culberson had always been openly opposed to prohibition. In 1922, however, the Klan was a decisive influence, and its activities were credited with being a major force in Culberson’s defeat for a fifth term in the Senate.

Culberson’s career transcended Texas politics. It extended to nationwide activity and, in some Senatorial duties such as his fight for the Treaty of Versailles after
World War I and his opposition to American imperialism, to international scenes. He did not seem dependent upon any one person for what he did or where he aimed politically, although he was a politician of great skill and did take advantage of good advice and help when he could get it. Edward M. House, in letters regarding House's wish that Culberson might become a candidate for the presidency, finally wrote to Culberson that he would turn, instead, to Woodrow Wilson. "The more I see of Governor Wilson the better I like him, and I think he is going to be a man one can advise with some degree of satisfaction. This, you know, you could never do with Mr. [William Jennings] Bryan," House wrote. Culberson was a man House had found subject to advice.

Culberson ran for attorney general in 1890 with Hogg indebted to him for his withdrawal from the attorney general's race in 1886. Culberson ran for governor in 1894 without enthusiastic support from Hogg. He ran for the Senate in 1898 with the last-minute, grudging support of Hogg, who would have preferred Reagan. Culberson continued his Senate career long after Hogg had withdrawn from public service, although Hogg remained active in the Democratic Party. Culberson deserves more than a casual afterthought that "he carried out the policies of Hogg" when the roles of these two men in Texas and the nation are considered.
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Cotner, James Stephen Hogg. 5. Hogg was smooth-shaven before he left the
governor's office.
48 Seymour, (ed.), *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, I, 35.
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50 DeShields, *They Sat in High Places*, 368.
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