

Biographies of West Virginia statehood leaders were prepared by Marshall University Humanities Program graduate students enrolled in Dr. Billy Joe Peyton's Fall 2010 "Historical Studies" class at Marshall's South Charleston campus.

By Andrew J. Wood

Gordon Battelle was born on November 14, 1814 in Newport, Ohio. He was educated at Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio and also at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. He graduated at the head of his class from Allegheny College in 1840, where his primary focus was Methodist ministry. During his time at Allegheny College, he met Francis H. Pierpont (future Governor of Virginia) the two were messmates, and eventually shared a lifelong friendship. Sometime between 1840 and 1850 Gordon became married to a Maria L. from Vermont. Of this marriage there were six children: Mary S., John G., Ellen V., Julia E., Fannie, Emma, and Cora. By 1842, he became a licensed preacher and in the same year he took over as head of Asbury Academy in Parkersburg, Virginia. He held the position at Asbury Academy until 1843, when the position of Principal at Northwest Virginia Academy in Clarksburg, Virginia became available. He held this position until 1851, and while he was Principal at the Academy he maintained his ministry and continued preaching. In 1847 he was ordained as a deacon and in 1849 he became an elder of the Methodist church. In 1851, Battelle resigned as the Principal of the Northwest Virginia Academy and from 1851 to 1860 he took a more active role in the Methodist church, specifically he was sent to the general conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1856 and again in 1860.

When the Civil War began, he was appointed by now Governor Pierpont to be an official visitor to military camps. In this capacity his main function was to write reports on the status of

food, shelter, clothing, and health of Federal troops stationed at Philippi, Elkwater, and Cheat Mountain. Furthermore, during the war, he served as the chaplain for the 1st (West) Virginia Infantry in November, 1861. Battelle also served as a delegate at the Constitution Convention, where he was an opponent to the continuation of slavery in the new state. He also served as the chairman for the Committee on Education. Battelle died in Washington D.C. on July 5, 1862 of typhoid fever.

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