

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 Carolyn S. Quinlan

JOHN S. CARLILE was born on December 16, 1817 in Winchester, Virginia of Scotch-Irish parents. His father died while he was very young. He received home schooling from his mother who was a person who understood an orderly lifestyle. When he turned fourteen, he began working as a salesman and clerk in a dry goods store until he turned seventeen and went into business for himself. He understood what it meant to have a professional occupation. He decided to study law and in 1840, was admitted to the Bar. He began his practice in Beverly, [West] Virginia in Randolph County. In 1847 he was elected to the Senate and served until 1851.

He was a focused student and conscientious legislator; and always ready to debate the issues. He was a forceful leader in the Senate. He was elected in 1850 as a delegate from Randolph County, to the Constitutional Convention to revise the Constitution of Virginia. His four years in the Senate were due to his diligence and hard work and gained him respect among his peers. This natural ability did not go unrecognized for he was nominated for Congress in what can be described as a very assertive campaign. He won and served one term, then returned to his law practice, which had grown strong and had begun to produce a great profit.

A man of vision, he moved to Clarksburg in Harrison County to further his opportunities. He gained prominence and distinction as a member of the Bar when he

litigated important cases in the Circuit, Federal and Supreme Courts, in that part of the State.

When the Civil War began, he was a staunch supporter of the Union and made it known his loyalty was with the Government. He influenced the councils with his aggressive spirit at the Wheeling Convention to Restore the Government of Virginia. In 1861 the Wheeling District elected him to the Thirty-seventh Congress, where he remained until he was elected to the Senate of the United States later that year, from the Restored Government of Virginia. He served in the Senate until his term expired in 1865 but while serving in the Senate, he was on the Senate Committee on Territories and was able to exert great influence in the forming of the new State of West Virginia.

He then retired and returned to his practice in Clarksburg. It was noted that no one in Virginia could surpass his ability as an orator. He died on October 24, 1878, at his home in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

Sources: Atkinson, George Wesley and Alvaro F. Gibbens, *Prominent Men of West Virginia*, Wheeling: W. L. Callin, 1890.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=vLYUAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=prominent+men+of+wv&source=bl&ots=9mO46TGFfl&sig=d3B9o7HLgIMG2tPSb9a87-#v=onepage&q=carlile&f=false>.

Gaines, Jr., William H. *Biographical Register of Members Virginia State Convention of 1861*. First Session. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1969. 25.