

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 Kelly L. Pruett

Thomas Rosaboom Carskadon

Thomas Rosaboom Carskadon (May 17, 1837-January 21, 1904), delegate from Hampshire County and youngest member of the convention, grew up on a farm with scant education. His father, Thomas Carskadon, a slave owner, represented Hampshire County in the Virginia General Assembly for six years (1827-1832), where he, after the Nat Turner insurrection, favored the abolition of Negro slavery. He was a Whig and in keeping with the political traditions of his family, his son in 1860 cast his first vote for Belle and Everett. He was outspoken in opposition to secession, for which he paid with the loss of one hundred twenty-five head of cattle and twenty-five horses. Resentment did not stop with these acts and young Carskadon was forced to flee the state for his life. In his absence he was, through assistance of soldiers stationed at New Creek (Keyser), elected a delegate to the Convention.

Despite his immaturity and limited education, Carskadon took part in the debates of the Convention, but always with deference to those of greater experience than himself in statecraft. Before the war ended he became a Radical Republican. He was appointed by Lincoln to be Assistant United States Assessor for the District of West Virginia, but President Johnson removed him. He was a Presidential elector on the Republican ticket in 1868 and again in 1876. For many years he was a member of the West Virginia State Republican Committee.

In 1884 Carskadon tried to induce a committee on resolutions of the State Republican Nominating Convention to go on record as favoring submission of a prohibition amendment to a proposed referendum. When the committee refused his request, he carried his efforts to the floor of the Convention, where he was defeated amidst hisses and jeers by the delegates. He then joined the Prohibition Party and was in 1888 its candidate for governor of West Virginia. Already he had won nationwide distinction as a prohibition lecturer. Since boyhood he had been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was honored by election and appointment “to every position of trust and responsibility open to a layman of that denomination.” During most of his life he lived at “Radical Hill” near Keyser, and was a successful farmer and stockman.

Sources:

George W. Atkinson and Alvaro F. Gibbens, *Prominent Men of West Virginia (1890)*, pp. 399-400.

Ambler, Charles H., Francis Haney Atwood and William B. Mathews, editors, *Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia (1861-1863)*, pp. 65-66, Huntington: Gentry Brothers Printers.