

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

**Downey, Owen Dorsey**

Owen Dorsey Downey (January 17, 1814-?), delegate from Hampshire County, was born in Brownsville, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. He moved to Alleghany County, Maryland, with his family in 1824, and there he resided for 28 years, earning his living as a merchant. In 1847 he was elected to the Maryland Legislature and in 1852 he was appointed Lumber Inspector for the city of Baltimore. That same year he resigned and moved to Virginia, where he was a merchant in Piedmont. He espoused the Union cause at the beginning of the Civil War and in 1861 was a member of the Wheeling Conventions which affected the Restoration of the government.

He was a member of the West Virginia Legislature until 1865, in which year he was appointed Assessor of Internal Revenue for one of the state's districts. In 1870 he ran for Congress as a Democrat, but lost to James C. McGrew. Later he moved to Wyoming where he engaged in mining and other pursuits and was a member of the Wyoming State Legislature, convening at Cheyenne, January 8, 1884.

Sources:

George W. Atkinson and Alvaro F. Gibbens, *Prominent Men of West Virginia (1890)*, p. 959.

Comstock, Jim, Editor, *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, Volume 7, pp. 1378-1379, Richwood: Jim Comstock Publishing, 1976.