

A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

DEC. 1-7, 1861

The December 1861 debate over the proposed name of the new state, “Kanawha,” included a little humor, a little nostalgia and some concerns about people being able to spell it correctly.

Oddly enough, there doesn’t appear to be any record of anyone questioning whether people could accurately pronounce “Kanawha.”

Constitutional Convention Delegate Granville Parker of Cabell County opposed the

idea of naming the state after one of its most prominent counties because he thought it would be too confusing.

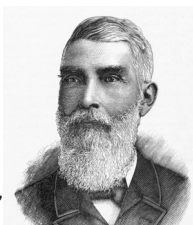
Other delegates, including James Henry Brown, pointed out that there was precedent for naming a state after a significant river within its borders.

Since most delegates heard from constituents who would rather see the state named something closer to “Western Virginia,” the general disregard for the name “Kanawha” drove the debates of that day.



Granville Parker

Ultimately, the delegates opted for the nostalgic, geographic angle, and decided to call it “WestVirginia” rather than “Kanawha.”



James Henry Brown

This sesquicentennial moment is brought to you by the West Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

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