

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

John W. Paxton was born on August 21, 1821 in Wheeling. His education was at Jefferson College, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania and Bacon College in Georgetown, Kentucky, where he studied engineering. He graduated in 1839. In the same year, work with his father in a wholesale grocery business, soon after his father died, and John had to bring in his cousin into the business. The renamed the company, "J.W. Paxton and Company." In 1845, he married Catharine Mason, the third daughter of Archibald Paul. There were seven children from this marriage none survived, but one was named James. In 1854, he spent 3 years settling the estate of his father-in-law Archibald Paul of Greenup County, Kentucky, who had a large iron manufacturing establishment. After the estate was settled, he became the director of the Northwestern Bank of Virginia and elected as a member of the city council of Wheeling. He was a member of both Wheeling Conventions and was a member of Governor Pierpont's council. Even though he was a slave owner, he did not support the continuation of slavery. Furthermore, he held the position of chairman of the committee on Finance and Taxation and was one of the commissioners between the new state constitution and admission to the union. While holding his position of President of the Northwestern bank of Virginia which he was elected for in 1860, he converted it to the First National Bank of West Virginia in 1863. Due to his bad health in 1867, he resigned at the bank and moved to Philadelphia. During which he married his second wife named Frances Joan in 1872, the second daughter to Samuel Logan of Washington County,

Pennsylvania. They had three children from this marriage: Archie, Matilda, William. In 1878, he returned to Wheeling, where he died on November 2, 1896.

Bibliography

Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia (1861-1863)

Edited by Charles H. Ambler, Frances Haney Atwood, and William B. Mathews.

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