

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

### **Tarr, Campbell**

Campbell Tarr (January 8, 1819-December 22, 1879), delegate from Brooke County, an elderly figure in the founding of West Virginia, was born in Wheeling, Brooke County, the son of William, a prominent merchant and river trader. He was trained to business in his father's store and later became a dry goods merchant on his own until the pre-Civil War period, when he took the side of the Unionists. He was elected to the Richmond Convention of 1861 by 255 votes over his Secessionist opponent and when the Ordinance of Secession was drafted, he left Richmond in secrecy, evading capture. It was said at the time, though not proved, that Governor Letcher and some of the authorities connived at their non arrest. Upon his arrival at home, he engaged in enlisting men for three months' service to the Union and in a short time recruited 150, with whom he supplied with provisions and clothing, much of which he never received payment for. He was instrumental in requisitioning a large quantity of arms for his home region to provide the Home Guards and soldiers on Wheeling Island with necessary equipment.

Meanwhile Tarr was appointed Acting Treasurer of the Restored Government under Governor Pierpont, with headquarters in Wheeling or Alexandria at various times. During this period he often had to aid stranded Union soldiers in distress or needing means of conveyance, by providing money from his own pocket. At the expiration of his term, he moved to Wellsburg,

and later lived on his farm until 1865. Later he moved to Kansas, where he died in the town of Sabetha, which he founded, but where he failed to make a financial success. His remains were brought back to Brooke County for burial.

He married three times: to Mary Hammond, of Brooke County, in 1848, who died a year later; then to her sister, Nancy, who lived until 1863. In 1864 he married Mary Beninghaus, a widow, who survived him. He had one daughter by his first wife, a son and two daughters by his second wife and a daughter by his third.

Sources:

George W. Atkinson and Alvaro F. Gibbens, *Prominent Men of West Virginia (1890)*, pp. 585-591.

Comstock, Jim, Editor, *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, Volume 21, pp. 4618-4619, Richwood: Jim Comstock Publishing, 1976.