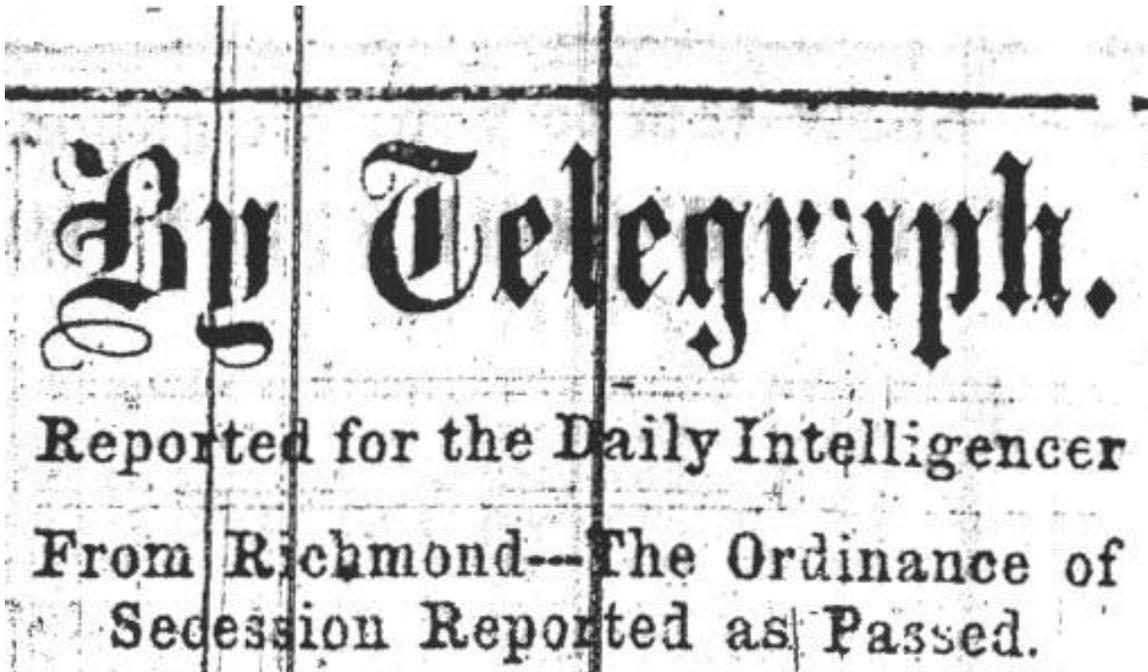


### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY APRIL 17



On April 17, 1861, delegates of the Richmond Convention approved an ordinance of secession, leading to the withdrawal of Virginia from the Union.

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**Investigate the Document:** (*West Virginia Historical Magazine, July 1902*)

1. Who was the outspoken pro-Union delegate from Harrison County?
2. How did the delegation at the Richmond Convention react to the attack on Fort Sumter, South Carolina?
3. Using your own words, describe the change to the North upon William H. Edwards's return after he left Richmond. Cite specific examples from the text.

**Think Critically:** Imagine yourself as a pro-Union delegate from western Virginia during the Richmond Convention. How would you verbalize your opposition to secession? Would you say anything at all? Could the North-South differences over slavery have been resolved without the bloodshed of the Civil War? Would the Confederacy have existed without the secession of Virginia?

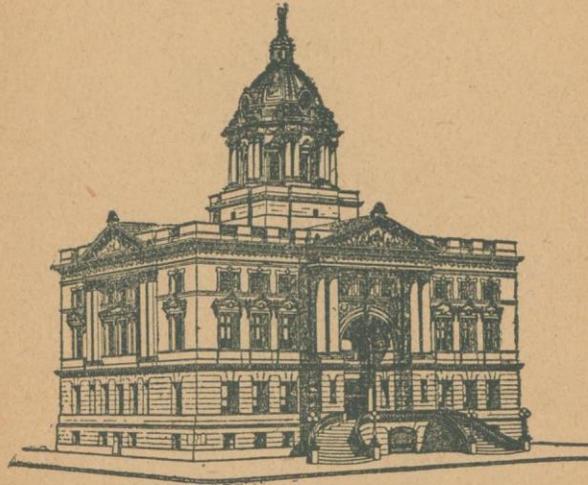
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and marked the place of his burial. Since then the plot has been nicely enclosed and the grave marked by a neatly sculptured marble. In that sequestered, but charming, valley retreat, the strong, jovial, brave and busy man has found repose,

While unheeded o'er his "silent tent,"  
The storms of life may beat.

W. T. PRICE.

Marlinton, W. Va.

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A BIT OF HISTORY.

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By WM. H. EDWARDS.

I went from New York to Richmond on Monday, April 8th, 1861, at the request of the Hon. Allen T. Caperton, who was there as a member of the Legislature. Soon after assembling, on January 14th, a convention of the people had been called, which accordingly met in February (13th), and was then in session. The Legislature had early passed resolutions adverse to the secession of Virginia to the Confederacy, and no doubt this represented the feeling of the State at that time. ----- and Isaac N. Smith represented the county of Kanawha. I think there was a third member, but, if so, I forgot his name. In the convention, the Hon. George W. Summers and Dr. Spicer Patrick were members from Kanawha. It was a gathering of the ablest men of the State. Ex-President Tyler was one of them, and so was ex-Governor Wise. From one of the lower counties came Jeremiah Morton, whom I had known as a stockholder in one of the cannel coal-oil companies of Paint Creek, in Kanawha county, and also as one of the recently organized White Sulphur Springs Company.

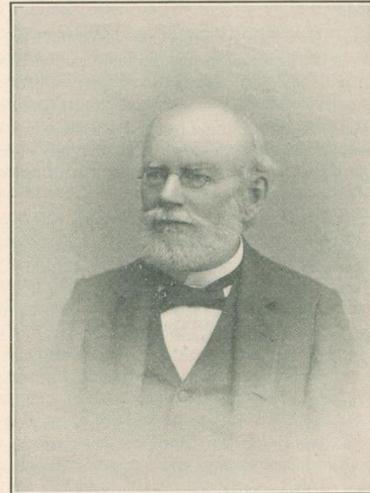
When I left New York public opinion throughout the North was unsettled. The people were astonished at the violent action of the most Southern States, and could not guess whither the currents were carrying the country. Many of the papers were outspoken against any attempt at coercion by the government, none of them more so than the influential New York Tribune, edited by Horace Greeley. He had gone so far as to utter the memorable words: "Erring sis-

ters, go in peace." How many of the tens of thousands who read and swore by that paper thought as Greeley thought there was as yet no means of knowing. The Herald, owned and run by the Scotchman, James Gordon Bennett, was clamoring for the right of a State to secede. Fernando Wood, the Mayor, openly advocated the secession of New York city, and would have it join the Confederacy. It was supposed that the Democratic party, as a whole, would refuse to follow President Lincoln if he should attempt coercion. The Governor, Horatio Seymour, at a mass meeting held in the city on January 31st, had vigorously opposed coercion of any sort, and he was influential with the Democracy. Therefore the North held itself in suspense, and most of the friends of the Union had faith that the black clouds would blow away.

On the day I left there was no symptom of present disturbance, at any rate. So when I reached Washington, I saw nothing to indicate a coming storm. Passing through Alexandria, I noticed a pole from which flew a new style of flag, and someone remarked that this was the emblem of the Confederacy, but there was no talk about it. People were keeping their opinions to themselves. That was all to Richmond. I put up at Ballard's Exchange Hotel, where I found Mr. Caperton and several friends from the Western counties. Judge Summers was one of these. He, in connection with John Tyler, William C. Rives and others, had represented Virginia in a peace deputation that met in Washington late in February or early in March, but which had been unable to obtain assurances or promises from the incoming administration. The Judge was a Union man then and always, and he expressed to me his disquiet at the situation. Indeed he was very much dispirited. He spoke of desperate efforts that were being made to take Virginia over to the Confederacy, and what the result would be he could not conjecture. Dr. Patrick felt in the same way, as did others whom I knew. All agreed that the sooner this convention separated the better for Virginia. I was surprised at this feeling, as from what I had heard at home I had not believed that Virginia could be made the cat's paw of the cotton States.

On successive days I attended the meetings of the convention, and listened to no end of speeches, some few sensible, deprecating excitement and hasty action, but the most were fiery and breathed of

war and blood. The Union men had already had their say, and had no wish now to protract the session, and the talking was mostly left to the other side. The extremists, on the other hand, were desirous of nothing so much as delay. If they could prolong the session a few weeks only, something might turn up to "fire the Southern heart," and force the State out. John Tyler was ardent for seces-



COL. W. H. EDWARDS.

sion, and talked interminably. So did Wise and Morton, and all three made long speeches on nothing. It seemed to me that these men were acting on a preconceived plan.

All this time Beauregard was planting his batteries against Sumter, and the signal to open fire was daily looked for. Frequent bulletins were posted about the hotels showing progress. This kept the excitement at fever-heat. But, while I saw evidence of satisfaction

with the assault on the fort, I heard citizens at the bulletin boards curse the folly of the Carolinians. The papers from the South, and some not so far from Richmond, added fuel, with their blood-curdling predictions of what was going to happen when the Louisiana Tigers and similar ferocious organizations let themselves loose on the cowardly scum of the North. A New Orleans paper just then was bragging that one buck from the South would chaw up three Yankees any day.

One morning Mr. Gooch, a member of one of the lower counties, who was as fond of the sound of his own voice as was Wise himself, announced that he had just read that 5,000 Tigers had set out for Washington, and shouted that he wished them god-speed and vowed he would join them when they reached Richmond. After this speaker subsided a member arose and spoke feelingly of his love for the Union and his reverence for the old flag, lamenting the indignities to which both were now subjected.

I was greatly impressed by the loyalty of his language, and by the feeling manifested, and on asking who the speaker was was told that it was Lieutenant or Captain Early, of Franklin county, a graduate of West Point, who had served with credit in Florida and Mexico. This tender-hearted Union man, who wept as he apostrophised the flag, was the same General Jubal Early, of Bull Run, Gettysburg, and the Shenandoah Valley, one of the bitterest enemies the Union had during the war, and who died unreconciled.

One of the most outspoken of the Union men was John S. Carlile, from Harrison county. I had made his acquaintance some years previous in the Western part of the State—a bright, able man. He fought Wise and Morton strenuously. Being a Democrat, he was very obnoxious to the secessionists.

Fort Sumter capitulated April 13th, to the delight of the majority of that convention. All the week Richmond had been filling up with long-haired, wild-eyed strangers, many of them said to be Knights of the Golden Circle, brought in for the purpose of influencing the convention and public opinion.

On Sunday I took a walk to the suburbs with Mr. Caperton, and he expressed himself as being greatly disturbed at the situation. He said that messengers were coming in from his county and from Greenbrier and the adjoining counties, and the country was report-

ed as wild for secession. He did not believe that the contagion could be resisted. He thought that if Virginia cast her lot with the Southern States, it would make for peace. The government would not dare to attack the Confederacy, with the addition of Virginia, and in time, through the good officers of his State, the two sections would be brought together again. I suggested that he use his great influence in his district, and that Mr. Price should do the same, and resist this ruinous action of the convention before the people, as Judge Summers and Colonel Ben. Smith and Lewis Ruffner would do in Kanawha; and I assured him that it was a great mistake to assume that the North would not fight for the Union.

A committee, or rather an embassy, had recently been sent to Washington to urge non-action. One of its members was the Honorable Ballard Preston, a particular friend of Mr. Caperton, and who had great influence with him. They returned while I was in the city, having failed to get the least concession. The depression of the Union men was deep and apparent. It seemed to them that every effort for peace was pre-destined to be a failure. They had hoped much from this embassy. Things were going to suit the other side, however. The ambassadors were to report to the public on Monday afternoon, at one of the churches, and I went thither, but was turned back at the door, as a stranger.

That day, 15th April, President Lincoln issued the call for 75,000 troops, of which Virginia was expected to furnish her quota. This added fresh fuel to the sufficiently hot fire. I went with a gentleman that evening to the Powhatan House, the headquarters of the extremists, to see what was going on. We found Mr. Morton enthroned in the lobby, haranguing, and evidently feeling extra good. Presently he addressed me personally: "Sir, if all my coal in Kanawha were diamonds, and the White Sulphur ran pearls, I would give the whole to have Virginia go out. Why, sir, in twenty years grass would be growing in the streets of New York, and Norfolk would be the bigger city." That was at the time a common hallucination, that war would ruin the North and build up the South, for "Cotton was King." In the summer of 1862, the story goes that General Early was leading his weary troops through Morton's plantation, when he encountered his fellow member of the convention: "Well, Uncle Jerry, what do you think now of the

compromises of the Constitution?" that having been a pet expression of his. The year after the war, I met Mr. Morton in Kanawha, and he remarked that he was broken "as fine as powder." I was sorry, for he was really a fine old gentleman, who was born for a better fate.

I had gone to bed that night when Mr. Caperton came to my room and advised me to leave town in the morning, else there was no telling when I might be able to get away. He said that some fellows had just been through the house carrying a rope, in search of Carlile. That gentleman probably had notice, for he had already left. He walked a few miles up the Fredericksburg road and boarded the train in the morning.

On Monday, April 17th, the convention passed the ordinance of secession, big with disaster to Virginia. It was to be submitted to the voters a month later, but the managers proceeded as if the State were already out, as in fact it was.

I left Richmond early, and heard afterwards that I had taken the last train that left for the North for many a day. When I reached Washington I found quite another city from that I had passed through a week before. Flags were out everywhere, soldiers were everywhere, and the lobby at Willard's was thronged with people eager to hear the latest news. In the morning, on taking the train for Philadelphia, I found Augustus Schell, collector of the port of New York under Buchanan, and who was, or had been, Sachem of Tammany. From him I learned of the vast change which that shot at Sumter had brought about through the whole North. A fine-looking young officer sat in the seat next in front, and Mr. Schell spoke of him as Colonel Ellsworth, from Chicago, who had been much talked of. During the preceding year, in anticipation of the coming troubles, he had organized and drilled a band of young athletes. Ellsworth was the first man killed in McClellan's advance at Alexandria.

After we had passed through Maryland the Stars and Stripes began to show. Philadelphia was gay with them. At that day it was necessary to cross the city in omnibuses, and this gave opportunity to see the display. So it was to Trenton, and through New Jersey. At Trenton the Governor of New Jersey got in, returning to his home in Newark. He, with his staff, had been engaged at the Cap-

tal on matters connected with the draft. A man came in and sat by me, and soon opened on the all-absorbing topic. He said he would not have believed a week ago that he would ever feel as he did today. That he was a Democrat, in Southern business, and had money due him from all over the South; and that he considered the money gone. "Damn them," said he; "I don't care now if I never see a cent of it. We'll fight it out."

New York, which had outwardly been quiet, now threw out a flag on every house and place of business. The Herald at first refused to show its loyalty in that way, and was very soon visited by a gathering of citizens who meant business unless a flag was run up in short order. Bennett found a flag mighty quick. The war feeling became intensified as the days passed, and as soldiers from the interior and the upper States, began to arrive, on their way to Washington. There was trouble at Baltimore and Washington was in danger of finding itself isolated. Troops were hurried forward, and even the Seventh Regiment, the crack regiment of the State, and whose special duty it is to keep order in New York city, was sent on.

The larger part of the Democratic party, when it came to the cross-roads, went with the administration, and so upset many calculations both at the North and South. War Democrats, these allies were called, and they fought for and upheld the government to the end of the war.

Patriotic meetings were held in the city squares by day and by night. Buchanan had left the Treasury empty, and there was neither coin, nor credit to the Government. Citizens came to the rescue and contributed according to their means to help the Treasury tide over the difficulty, A. T. Stewart heading the list with fifty thousand dollars. In these days of multi-millionaires, who can draw their checks for millions, such a subscription from the greatest merchant of New York, seems trivial, but that was the day of small things in all but the love of country. The rivulets from all over the North made a sizeable stream, and helped at Washington amazingly. The banks had suspended payment, and silver had passed out of sight. To relieve the consequent pressure, diminutive bills called "shin-plasters" were issued by banks, corporations, firms and individuals, and passed every where without question. Even postage stamps for a while passed as currency. Congress was

in session presently, and it was not long before ways and means were devised, and the country, that is, what was left of the country, went on as of old. Very few persons supposed that the war, if there should be a war, would last long; it might be six months—possibly a little longer; but the good sense of the people, north and south, might be trusted to make for peace and re-union. Little the north then knew of the bitterness of the South, and still less the South knew of the grim determination of the North.

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