

Biographies of western delegates who attended the 1861 Virginia Secession Convention were transcribed by undergraduate students enrolled in Dr. Billy Joe Peyton's Fall 2010 "Introduction to Public History" class at West Virginia State University.

By Gary Blackhurst

JOHN SINSELL BURDETT, of Taylor County (now in West Virginia), was born in Harrison County(now in West Virginia) on December 20,1818, and was the son of Frederick Burdett and Susan Sinsell Burdett. He attended local schools, then became a clerk in his father's store at Pruntytown (now Williamsport), then in Harrison Count. He became an active merchant on his own account and was also active in public affairs. Burdett helped draft the petition to the Virginia General Assembly which resulted in the formation of Taylor County from Harrison in 1844, and he represented Taylor County in the House of Delegates from 1846 to 1849 and again during the session of 1852-1853. In 1845 he married Abby Ann Johnson.

Burdett was elected to the State Convention as the delegate from Taylor County. He was a Unionist and voted against secession on April 4 and again on April 17. Because of his subsequent pro-Unionist activities in western Virginia, he was expelled from the Virginia Convention in June. He was a member of Wheeling (or Restored Government) Convention, and he took an active role in the proceedings which resulted in separate statehood for West Virginia.

Burdett served as a captain in the commissary department of the Union army during the war. He was a member of the West Virginia Senate from 1866 to 1867 and was state treasurer of West Virginia from 1871 to 1876. He continued active in Republican party politics until the last decade of the nineteenth century.

SOURCES: PMWV, pp. 677-679; RGA, p 353.