

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 Jeffrie Carroll

John Echols (MONROE)

JOHN ECHOLS, of Monroe County (now in West Virginia), was born in Lynchburg on March 20, 1823, and was the son of Joseph E. Echols and Elizabeth Lambeth Echols. He was educated at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) and at Harvard. He became a lawyer and practiced his profession in Rockbridge County for several years and then, about 1850, moved to Monroe County. He married Mary Jane Caperton (a sister of ALLEN T. CAPERTON), by whom he had three children. After her death, he married Mrs. Mary Cochran Reid of New York City. Echols became commonwealth's attorney of Monroe County, and he was a member of the House of Delegates during the session of 1852-1853. He was also a member of the board of visitors of the Virginia Military Institute.

Echols, as a delegate from Monroe County in the State Convention, voted against secession on April 4. On April 17, however, he voted for secession. He was commissioned as a colonel in the Confederate army, and thereupon resigned from the Convention. Colonel Echols took part in the first battle of Manassas and in Jackson's Valley campaign of 1862. He was promoted to brigadier general, and after seeing service in southwestern Virginia, returned to the Valley, where he fought in the battle of New Market and in JUBAL A. EARLY'S campaign of 1864.

After the war Echols moved to Staunton. He was a member of the House of Delegates from 1877 to 1880. He also played a prominent part in the affairs of the Virginia Central Railway, which was reorganized in 1869 as the Chesapeake and the Ohio Railway. He died in Staunton on May 24, 1896.

Sources: DAB, VI, 1-2, *Men of Mark*, V, 124-128; VMI, Reg., p. 369; W & L, Cat. P. 91