

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 Brittani Lynch

George McCandless Porter, of Hancock County (now in West Virginia), was born in Brooke County (now in West Virginia) on May 29, 1835, and was the son of James Scott Porter and Elizabeth McCandless Porter. He was educated at Washington College in Pennsylvania, and they settled at New Cumberland, Hancock County, where he was associated with his father in the manufacture of firebrick. In 1859 he married his college sweetheart, Sarah Lewis of Washington, Pennsylvania. Porter was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates from 1857 to 1861.

While still holding his seat in the legislature, Porter was elected to the Convention as delegate from Hancock County. He was a thoroughgoing Unionist and voted against secession on April 4 and on April 17. He wrote later that he "would have suffered this right arm to be cut off" rather than sign the ordinance of secession. He was expelled from the Virginia Convention in June, 1861, for his continued opposition to secession. Porter was a member of the Wheeling Convention, and he also helped organize a volunteer company of home guards, known as the "Panhandle Grays." He saw little active service because of failing health, and he died of tuberculosis in New Cumberland, Hancock County, on July 8, 1864.

Source: Stanton C. Crawford and Nancy C. Hodges, "George McCandless Porter," *Western Pennsylvania Magazine*, XLII (July, 1963), 259-283.