

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 Andrew J. Wood

John Adams Dille was born July 19, 1821 near Prosperity, Washington County, Pennsylvania to Ezra and Mary Dille. J. A. Dille was educated at Green Academy and Washington College in Pennsylvania, where he was known for his ability to write essays. He was unable to finish his education at Washington College due to an illness, after which he moved to Kingwood, Preston County, Virginia in 1843. Between the years of 1843 to 1844, Dille learned to read the law from Congressman William G. Brown Sr. (grandfather to John J. Brown, another delegate to the Constitution Convention) He was also admitted to the bar and taught at a school that would later become Preston Academy. It was also during this time that he was involved in creating the legal partnership of Brown & Dille. In 1849, J.A. Dille married his first wife Jane Rachel, daughter of Elisha M. Hagens of Kingwood. Jane died after they had been married for just three years. During their three year marriage John and Jane had one child, a son named Oliver Hagens Dille. In 1853 John married for the second time. His second wife Linnie Suter, was the eldest daughter of Thomas Brown of Kingwood. Linnie gave John two additional children a son named Clarence B. and a daughter named Mary.

In the 1860 presidential election, J.A. Dille favored the Constitutional Democrat candidate Stephen A. Douglas. Dille who was known for his strong sentiments for preserving the Union, was selected to be a delegate to the 1861 Constitutional Convention. The 40 year old Dille was to represent Preston County at the Convention. While at the Convention he was an

active participant who made several contributions. His main contributions during the Convention were being a member of the Committee of County Organization and the Judicial Committee; he was also selected as the vice-president in the last day of the recalled session. After the Constitution of what would become West Virginia was approved by the people, Dille used his influence in Washington D.C. to make sure it passed in Congress.

In 1863 Dille was elected without opposition as the first Judge of the Second Judicial Circuit Court. Because he had a strong interest in his children's education and wanted to make sure they had the best education facilities available to them he moved to Morgantown, Monongalia, West Virginia in 1864. It is here that not only would Dille maintain a residence for the rest of his life but also was ruling and influential elder in the Presbyterian Church. After ten years of judicial service Dille decided to retire from the bench. During his retirement he retreated to his two farms; Beatty Estate in Preston county and Coombs Farm in Monongalia County. John spent the rest of his life on these estates tending to and overseeing the management of the crops, animals, and daily business. He died on December 19, 1986.

### Bibliography

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