

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

Stephen M. Hansley, the son of Stephen and Nancy Farley Hensley, who were pioneer settlers of the region, was born in 1824. He was born on the Tug Fork of Sandy River, Logan, Virginia. His father died, while he was young, and his mother became re-married to Pyrrhus McGinnis of Fayette, Randolph County, Virginia. After this marriage they moved to a large tract of land on the Marsh Fork of Coal River. While Stephen got along with his step-father he kept his father's surname and over the years began to spell it Hansley. On May 8, 1845, he married Phoebe Jones, and they had three children: Sarah Virginia born in 1847, who married Rev. Austin Workman of Boone County and had 9 children, Achilles born in 1849, who never married and died in 1872 in Texas, Cynthia Elizabeth born in 1851, who married late in life Solomon Hill and died childless. Phoebe died while their children were very young and Stephen remarried Rebecca Walls of Raleigh County; they had no children. He was an active member of the Methodist Episcopal church, and was described as being very serious minded and well-informed. During the Secession crisis he enlisted on November 20, 1861, in Company H of the Seventh Virginia Calvary. Six days later, he was selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. On February 15, 1862, he was discharged from military service by General Rosecrans on account of nearsightedness. After the war, in 1867, he was a county recorder for Raleigh County, but shortly after moved to Gallipolis, Ohio. In 1880, he moved back to Marmet, Kanawha County, West Virginia; where he died on July, 1899. He is buried at Old Stone Church Cemetery.

Bibliography

Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia (1861-1863)

Edited by Charles H. Ambler, Frances Haney Atwood, and William B. Mathews.

(Huntington: Gentry Brothers Printers, 1939) 74-75.