

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 Carolyn S. Quinlan

FONTAINE SMITH was a prominent lawyer in the State of Virginia. In 1857 he settled in Mannington, Marion County where, for many years, he divided his time between practicing law and teaching school.

In 1860 he served as Presidential Elector on the Douglas Democratic ballot. He was elected to the Virginia Legislature in 1861. He strongly opposed secession, and when the ordinance for secession was passed he declined to serve as legislator. However, he did take an active role in the restoration of the State Government of Virginia at the Convention in Wheeling in 1861.

He served as Chairman of the House Committee on Courts of Justice. He was offered the Congressional nomination candidacy for the Second District at The Grafton Democratic Convention in 1868, but refused.

He was editor of the *Liberalist* and a member of the Constitutional Convention from Kanawha County, Charleston, West Virginia, in 1872. He served in the Senate from 1881 to 1883 and thereafter gave up politics to devote himself full-time to his thriving law practice.

His son, Clarence L. Smith, a promising lawyer in his own right, became the Clerk of Marion County and remained in that position for many years. He was eventually named as a Regent to West Virginia University in 1886.

Sources: Atkinson, George Wesley and Alvaro F. Gibbens, *Prominent Men of West Virginia*, Wheeling: W. L. Callin, 1890.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=vLYUAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=prominent+men+of+wv&source=bl&ots=9mO46TGFfl&sig=d3B9o7HLgIMG2tPSb9a87-#v=onepage&q=smith&f=false>.