

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY NOVEMBER 26



Independence Hall, Wheeling

A constitutional convention for the proposed state of Kanawha opened on November 26, 1861.

CSO: SS.8.22, ELA.8.1, ELA.8.3

Investigate the Document: (Ar1868, Box 1, Folder 1)

1. Where did the constitutional convention for the proposed state of Kanawha take place?
2. Who called the convention to order? What county did he represent?
3. What was Mr. Stuart's opinion on Mr. Van Winkle's proposal to nominate permanent officers of *this* convention? What did he propose instead? Was the motion to raise a committee eventually approved?

Think Critically: What was the purpose of the constitutional convention? Why do you suppose "Kanawha" was not chosen as the name of the newly formed state? Who was responsible for proposing "West Virginia" as the name of the state?

Debates and Proceedings.

Wheeling, Virginia,
Tuesday, November 26th, 1861.

In pursuance of elections held on the fourth Thursday of October, 1861, under authority of "an Ordinance to provide for the formation of a new State out of a portion of the territory of this State," passed August 20th of that year by the Convention which reorganized the government of the State of Virginia, the Convention to frame a Constitution for the proposed new State of Kanawha assembled in the United States Court Room, at the city of Wheeling, at eleven o'clock a. m., this day.

The convention was called to order by Chapman J. Stuart, of Doddridge, who nominated as temporary chairman John Hall, of Mason.

Mr Hall was chosen and assumed the chair.

E. H. Caldwell, of Marshall, moved the appointment of G. L. Cramer, of Wheeling, temporary Secretary.

Mr Cramer was appointed and entered upon the discharge of his duties.

P. G. Van Winkle, of Wood, presented a roll of the members, made out from returns received at the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

It was called by the Secretary and the following members responded to their names:

Josiah Simmons, of Randolph county.
 James H. Parsons, of Tucker county.
 John J. Brown and John A. Dille, of Preston county.
 W. T. Willey and H. Dering, of Monongalia county.
 E. B. Hall and H. Haymond, of Marion county.
 Harmon Sinsel, of Taylor county.
 E. J. O'Brien, of Barbour county.
 R. L. Brooks, of Upshur county.
 J. M. Powell, of Harrison county.
 Robert Irvine, of Lewis county.
 James H. Brown, of Kanawha county.
 W. W. Brumfield, of Wayne county.
 Grenville Parker, of Cabell county.
 D. S. Montague, of Putnam county.
 John Hall, of Mason county.
 E. S. Mahon, of Jackson county.
 H. D. Chapman, of Roane county.
 B. F. Stewart, of Wirt county.
 W. W. Warder, of Gilmer county.
 A. J. Wilson, of Ritchie county.
 P. G. Van Winkle and W. E. Stevenson, of Wood county.
 Joseph Hubbs, of Pleasants county.
 Abraham D. Soper, of Tyler county.
 Chapman J. Stewart, of Doddridge county.

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- ✓ R. W. Lauck, of Wetzel county.
- ✓ E. H. Caldwell and T. H. Trainer, of Marshall county.
- ✓ James W. Paxton and Gordon Battelle, of Ohio county.
- ✓ Joseph S. Pomeroy, of Hancock county.
- ✓ George Sheets, of Hampshire county.
- ✓ Abijah Dolly, of Hardy county.
- ✓ Robert Hagar, of Boone county.

The Secretary. There are 37 now present.

The Chair. There is a quorum.

Mr Van Winkle. The whole number authorized is 51.

The Chair. The whole number returned was 45.

Mr Van Winkle. I now move that the rules of the June convention be adopted as the rules of this convention, and that a committee of five be appointed to inquire and report whether any amendment to them is necessary.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr Van Winkle. I would further move, sir, that a committee be appointed to nominate suitable persons for permanent officers of this convention; which would include not only the President and Secretary, but door-keepers and Sergeant-at-Arms. The committee would also indicate, probably, what officers would be required. I apprehend that would be the best way to proceed in reference to it. I believe that is the usual mode. I suppose a committee of nine would do.

Mr Stuart of Doddridge. It strikes me, sir, that this committee is unnecessary. It is unusual, so far as my experience goes. I think that the proper motion to be made now is, that the convention proceed to elect their permanent officers. I see no necessity for appointing a committee. We may as well engage in the election of our permanent officers at once. Any person can suggest. I know that has been the rule adopted by former conventions in Virginia — the last two at least. I believe in our convention in June, we, perhaps, appointed a committee.

Mr Van Winkle. Well, sir, it strikes me we have come here together, many of us strangers to each other, and have not been here long enough to get acquainted; and it seems to me the intervention of a committee would be peculiarly appropriate in a case of this kind. I should hardly be willing to go into an election to day, in this few hours meeting, but as I before stated I am not at all strenuous: the Convention can decide it.

Mr Willey. I suppose the object of the member from Wood is not to preclude the nomination of others than those nominated by the committee.

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Mr Van Winkle. O, no.

Mr Wiley. If that be the case I cannot very well see myself what would be gained by referring it to a committee. It is true we are strangers to each other, and by a little friendly conference may arrive at better conclusions than we could in a hasty manner here. I concur with the gentleman from Doddridge, however, that it is not usual in bodies of this kind to resort to expedients of that character. It is immaterial with me, provided the action of the committee is not final but leaves the coast clear to put other persons in competition if any member should see fit to do so.

Mr Sinsel. It may be that there will be some contested seats here. Would it not be better first to arrange that matter by appointing a Committee on Credentials. They have not all responded to their names here. Is not that matter to be examined into first?

Mr Pomeroy. I hope, Mr President, we will, after these preliminary matters have a recess till the afternoon; and then I think we will be prepared to go into a permanent organization and elect all the officers necessary. I think it would be a waste of time to spend two days in the organization of a body no larger than the present one.

The motion to raise the committee was not agreed to.

Mr Sinsel. I move that there be appointed a committee of five on Credentials and Contested Seats.

The motion was agreed to, and the Chair named the following gentlemen to compose the committee:

Messrs. Sinsel, Brown of Preston, Stuart of Doddridge, Parker, and Partow.

Mr Van Winkle. If the Chair please, I desire the appointment of another committee; and with a view that we are so recently come together, I will make the motion now, and if it is the pleasure of the Convention to have the committee appointed, the Chair can take time till the assembling in the afternoon to select names and can then announce them. I move, sir, that a committee, say of nine, be appointed to report the best method of bringing before the Convention such provisions to be inserted in the constitution as may be proposed. It is expected that the committee will report the business that is to come before the Convention, assigning each matter to an appropriate committee.