

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 Kelly L. Pruett

### **Joseph Semple Pomeroy**

Joseph Semple Pomeroy (December 26, 1821-August 26, 1906), delegate from Hancock county, was a son of John and Jane (Porter) Pomeroy. He was born in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, and educated at Washington College, Pennsylvania, and the Western Theological Seminary. In 1849 he was licensed to preach by the Beaver presbytery and the following year began his ministry at Fairview (Pughtown), Hancock County, (West) Virginia, where he remained until 1871. For a time thereafter, he filled no regular station, but beginning with 1877 he served a church in Moundsville, West Virginia, for one year. From 1878 to 1886 he was a "supply" located at Cameron. Following the termination of his services there, he returned to Fairview, where he was active until the time of his death. He preached on the day he died.

The Rev. Pomeroy was active in the convention and was especially interested in education. For years he was a member of the school board of this magisterial district in Hancock County, and is said to have been partial to Republican teachers. Teachers, who applied to him personally, after a custom of the time, were examined to determine their fitness. As a rule he had two questions. The applicant was asked to spell "Abakadazra" and to explain to Pomeroy's satisfaction which side was right in the "War of the Rebellion." As a gesture to his profession, but also as a tribute to his scholarship and pleasing personality, he was presented with the gold pen used to make the final draft of the First Constitution of West Virginia.

Sources:

James B. Rogers, *History of the Washington Presbytery* (Philadelphia, 1889), Pomeroy Family Traditions.

Ambler, Charles H., Francis Haney Atwood and William B. Mathews, editors, *Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia (1861-1863)*, pp. 85-86, Huntington: Gentry Brothers Printers.