

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 Wesley A. Kuemmel

William Erskine Stevenson:

William E. Stevenson was born in Warren County, Pennsylvania on March 18, 1820. As a young man he trained as a cabinetmaker in Pittsburgh before entering politics in 1856. He was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, where he served one term before moving to Wood County to become a farmer. Stevenson represented Wood County at the Constitutional Convention. From 1863 until 1868, Stevenson served in the West Virginia Senate, leaving that office when he was elected governor of West Virginia. As governor during Reconstruction, Stevenson took the politically risk position of advocating the re-enfranchisement of former Confederate soldiers. Stevenson was defeated in his bid for reelection in 1870 and instead turned to business. After leaving public office, he published the *State Journal* newspaper and was an executive of the West Virginia Oil and Land Company. Stevenson died on November 29, 1883 and was buried at Riverview Cemetery in Parkersburg. (Sobel and Raimo)

Sobel, Robert, and John Raimo. *Biographical Directory of the Governors of the United States, 1789-1978*. Reprint ed. Westport, CT: Meckler, 1988. Print.