



# A NEW HOME FOR *Liberty*

## HUMAN RIGHTS, SLAVERY, AND THE CREATION OF WEST VIRGINIA

On June 20, 1863, in the midst of the United States Civil War, the new state of West Virginia was created from part of Virginia. What led to this historic split?

Two years earlier, in April of 1861 – after many years of national debate and tension over the issue of slavery – the Civil War broke out at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. On April 17, 1861, a majority of delegates in Virginia's capital voted to secede from the United States and to join the newly-formed Confederate States of America, where pro-slavery interests dominated.

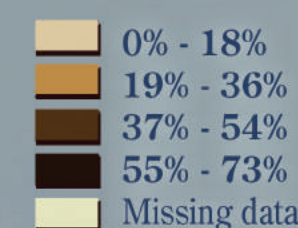
Suddenly, western Virginians – many of whom had long felt alienated from eastern Virginia – had to face a historic choice: in what kind of country – in what nation – did they want to live?

Many white people in Western Virginia, regardless of their feelings about slavery, were fiercely loyal to the United States of America. They saw no benefit in leaving the country that their forbearers had created. Few if any African Americans wanted to live in a new nation that was dedicated to protecting slavery.

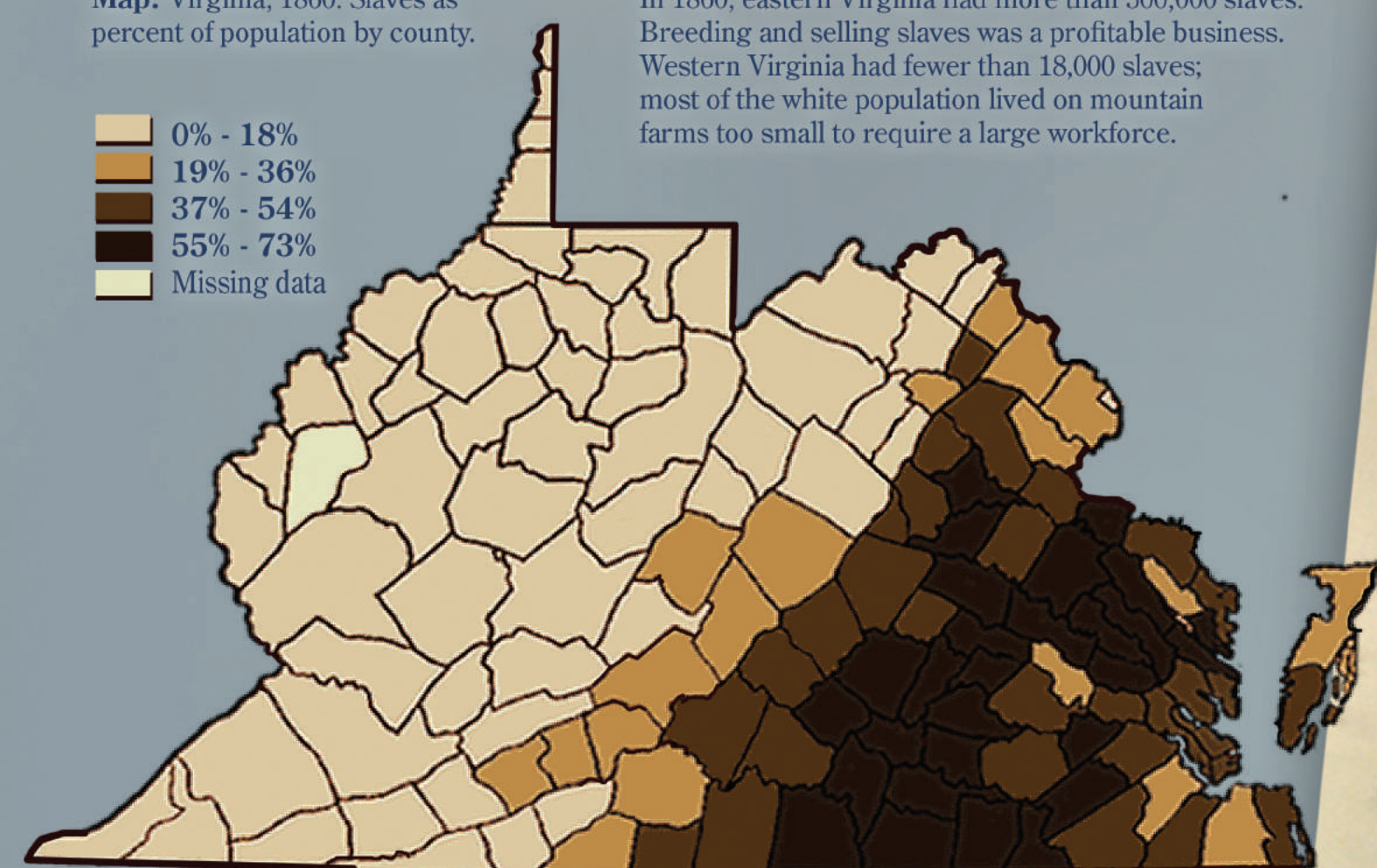
Faced with this historic choice, western Virginians who opposed secession took a bold, risky, and unprecedented step. Risking their lives and fortunes, they undertook to create a new, loyal state – a state that would remain part of the United States of America, no matter how the Civil War ended.

Their efforts, we know today, were successful. In 1863, a new star was added to "Old Glory" – the Mountain State of West Virginia – a "New Home for Liberty."

Map: Virginia, 1860. Slaves as percent of population by county.



In 1860, eastern Virginia had more than 500,000 slaves. Breeding and selling slaves was a profitable business. Western Virginia had fewer than 18,000 slaves; most of the white population lived on mountain farms too small to require a large workforce.



A MAP  
OF THE  
INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS  
OF  
VIRGINIA  
Prepared by C. CROZET, late Principal Engineer of V.  
*Under a resolution of the General Assembly*  
ADOPTED MARCH 12<sup>th</sup> 1860

West Virginia, shown here highlighted from an 1848 map of Virginia by state surveyor Claudius Crozet, was the only permanent change to the United States map to result from the Civil War.



In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln authorized the enlistment of African-American soldiers into the United States Army. By the end of the Civil War in 1865, 180,000 African American soldiers, many of them former slaves, formed 10% of the Union Army's ranks. An estimated 40,000 gave their lives in military service.



Harper's Weekly, the New York-based national news magazine, featured the Wheeling Statehood Conventions as front page news on July 4, 1861.

The movement for a new state had roots in long-standing sectional conflicts in Virginia. In an 1847 pamphlet on the subject, Henry Ruffner illustrated the social and economic divide between eastern and western Virginia.

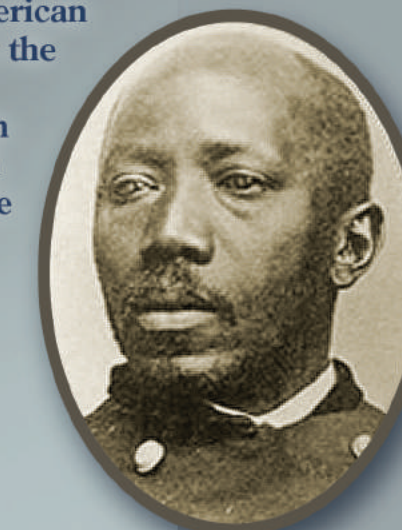


J.R. Clifford was born near Moorefield in 1848 and served as a corporal in the United States Colored Troops. He returned to West Virginia after the Civil War, where he became a teacher and school principal. He also published a leading African-American newspaper. In 1887, Clifford became the state's first African American attorney, and he joined other West Virginia African American leaders to successfully defend voting rights in the new state at the same time that black citizens in Virginia and across the South were losing their right to vote.



Gordon Battelle, a leading Clarksburg educator and minister, became a prominent Statehood advocate and a spokesman for Wheeling delegates who sought to abolish slavery in the new state. Battelle warned that Congress would never accept West Virginia without a "slave emancipation clause." He was right: Congress required just such a clause when it passed the West Virginia Statehood Bill in 1862. Battelle did not live to see his dream come true; he died in 1862 while serving in the Union Army.

*"The injuries which slavery inflicts upon our own people are manifold and obvious. It practically aims to enslave not merely another race, but our own... [it] puts a lock on every man's mouth who will not shout for and swear by the system."*



Martin Delany, a native of Charles Town in Jefferson County (in today's Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia), distinguished himself before the Civil War by becoming one of the first three African-Americans admitted to the Harvard Medical school. Delany met with Abraham Lincoln and urged him to enlist African Americans in the Union Army. Lincoln appointed Delany a commissioned Major, and the new officer began recruiting thousands of escaped slaves and free blacks for military service in the United States Colored Troops.



Granville Hall was born near Clarksburg in 1837 and was the Reporter for the Wheeling Statehood Conventions. Hall's parents opposed slavery for moral and religious reasons; his father was indicted by the Harrison County Grand Jury for subscribing to "seditious" anti-slavery newspapers. Hall became the second Secretary of State of West Virginia, and was instrumental in forging the postwar "Flick Amendment," which guaranteed the political rights of ex-Confederates and African Americans in the newly-formed state.

*"It is apparent...that the question underlying all these surface differences was the issue of slavery in Virginia... Like the watch which persisted in keeping wrong time...nothing could go right in Virginia till the concealed but evil influence of slavery had been removed."*



Francis and Julia Pierpont of Morgantown strongly opposed slavery. Francis, a former teacher and an attorney for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, joined the Wheeling Statehood Convention in 1861, where delegates elected him Governor of the "Restored Government of Virginia," the body that created West Virginia. Julia Pierpont worked tirelessly with her husband to build political support for statehood. After the war, the couple created and taught at a school in Fairmont for African American children.

*"Gentlemen, if we could only get rid of the vast herd of the leaders in the rebellion...and get their lands into the hands of honest, working men, I predict for the State a prosperity unexampled in its history. In ten years it would be more than a compensation... for all the slaves they have taken."*



Archibald Campbell edited the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, which supported Lincoln in the 1860 election and opposed slavery and secession. Campbell's thundering editorials argued that the economic welfare of western Virginia required a break from Virginia. He correctly predicted that Congress would make a slave emancipation clause in the new West Virginia Constitution a condition for granting statehood.

*"Now is there a man from all the Northwest who has the nerve and the genius to lead this great movement? ...The man who can do it will be a hero—a hero in the cause of humanity and liberty..."*



Shortly after the Civil War ended in 1865, the State of West Virginia awarded individual medals to hundreds of African American soldiers who served in the 45th West Virginia Colored Infantry. Some of these medals are still unclaimed in the West Virginia State Archives - silent memorials to these brave soldiers and their service to their country.

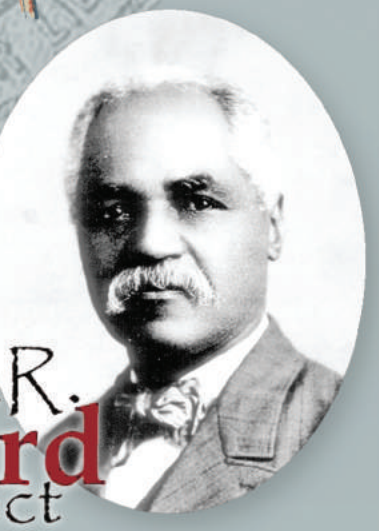


The United States' and West Virginia flags (below) both became symbols of liberty and freedom for the people who fought and sacrificed for West Virginia and the Union.

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