

P 6877

THE UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF
FRANCIS HARRISON PIERPONT

ADDRESS OF
SENATOR STEPHEN B. ELKINS
OF WEST VIRGINIA

DELIVERED IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1910

"The 20th of June should be the independence day of West Virginia and made a legal holiday for all the years to come."

"He was made of such stuff as builders of states and empires are made."

"He chained his name to undying fame and then joined the dead, who never die."



WASHINGTON : 1910

ADDRESS
OF
HON. STEPHEN B. ELKINS.

STATUE OF FRANCIS H. PIERPONT.

Mr. ELKINS said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: To-day West Virginia honors the memory and deeds of Francis H. Pierpont, one of her most illustrious sons, by tendering to the Nation his statue in marble to be placed in Statuary Hall.

The credit of having formed the new State of West Virginia, now a great Commonwealth, with nearly a million and a half of happy, prosperous, and contented people, and destined to hold within her borders one of the densest populations in the Union, must ever remain with Governor Pierpont and his associates.

Before the Revolutionary war the question of dividing the Colony of Virginia and giving a separate government in some form to the people of the mountain portion was agitated.

A certain amount of friction and jealousy always existed between the people of the mountain region of Virginia and those of the agricultural lands extending back from the ocean to the Allegheny Mountains. The people of the lowlands, aristocratic in their tendencies, were wealthy, and generally owners of plantations and slaves, while the people inhabiting the mountainous portion of the State, who always loved liberty, were poor and compelled to battle with nature and the elements for a livelihood.

Following the Revolutionary war for independence and for thirty or forty years preceding the late civil war the question of separation or division of the State was again raised and, off and on, became acute.

In a speech made a short time before his death, October 24, 1852, at the laying of the corner stone of a monument in the city of Richmond, Daniel Webster warned the people that in case

of secession or the dissolution of the Union, Virginia would be divided into two States.

Old Virginia, which had given to the Nation so many great statesmen and great Presidents, with her proud history, her glorious and hallowed memories, and splendid traditions, chose, in an hour of passion, the way of secession—going out of the orbit of the Nation's life. This false step and the civil war that followed furnished the way to West Virginia being made a State in the Union.

The loyal and liberty-loving mountaineers of what is now West Virginia seized this opportunity and realized the fruition of the hopes cherished in the hearts of their ancestors for more than a century.

The ordinance of secession was passed by the State of Virginia on May 23, 1861, and ratified by the majority of the people on June 11, 1861. Following the passage of the ordinance, and even before its ratification, the people of northwestern Virginia, residing principally in the mountains and the valley of the Ohio River, and occupying that portion of the Commonwealth now embracing West Virginia, who were in the main loyal to the Union, called a convention to protest against the act of secession and to take steps to reorganize and restore the state government.

The first convention assembled, with this end in view, on May 13, 1861, and after a session of three days adjourned on May 16. It adopted a series of resolutions, the ninth of which is as follows:

Resolved, That inasmuch as it is a conceded political axiom that government is founded on the consent of the governed, and is instituted for their good, and it can not be denied that the course pursued by the ruling power in the State is utterly subversive and destructive of our interests, we believe we may rightfully and successfully appeal to the proper authorities of Virginia to permit us peacefully and lawfully to separate from the residue of the State and form ourselves into a government to give effect to the wishes, views, and interests of our constituents.

This was a direct appeal to Virginia by the citizens opposed to secession, founded on good reasons, to consent to the formation of a new State.

The second convention assembled June 11 and remained in session until August 21.

It proceeded at once to form a government, calling it the reorganized government of Virginia. The proceedings of this, as well as succeeding conventions, which perfected the machinery of the restored government, were attended by many prominent citizens of West Virginia now living and highly honored.

Arthur I. Boreman was president of the first convention and afterwards became the first governor of the State of West Virginia. In this convention "A declaration of the people of Virginia represented in convention at Wheeling protesting against secession" and declaring vacant the offices of all who favored the same was adopted, which is as follows:

Viewing with great concern the deplorable condition to which this once happy Commonwealth must be reduced unless some regular adequate remedy is speedily adopted, and appealing to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe for the rectitude of our intentions, do hereby, in the name and on behalf of the good people of Virginia, solemnly declare that the preservation of their dearest rights and liberties and their security in person and property imperatively demand the reorganization of the government of the Commonwealth, and that all acts of the said convention and executive tending to separate this Commonwealth from the United States, or to levy and carry on war against them, are without authority and void; and the offices of all who adhere to the said convention and executive, whether legislative, executive, or judicial, are vacated.

On the 20th of June, 1861, the reorganized State of Virginia elected state officials, Francis H. Pierpont being named governor.

There was a regular session of the general assembly, convened December 2, 1861, which adjourned February 13, 1862.

In his message to the legislature Governor Pierpont said:

I regret that I can not congratulate you upon the termination of the great civil war with which it has pleased Divine Providence to chasten the pride of the American people. It still rages in our midst and around our very homes. But a year ago no nation was more prosperous than this. Peace, happiness, and prosperity prevailed throughout the land. Now the elements of civil society have been broken up. Brothers are arrayed against brothers and father against son; and rapine and murder are desolating the land.

The following extract is taken from the governor's message to the third session of the general assembly, which convened December 4, 1862, and adjourned February 6, 1863:

Gentlemen, it is our fortune to live in these times of fearful responsibilities and duties. We are making history to be read by, and exert its influence upon, coming generations. With a deep sense of our

responsibilities and with an earnest supplication to the Great Source of all strength for assistance in the discharge of our respective duties during this momentous crisis, let us enter upon the work before us.

These messages give a vivid picture of the horrors and results of civil war and show what manner of man Governor Pierpont was; they also show the great difficulties against which he and his associates contended under most trying conditions and the tremendous responsibilities resting upon them. How true and how prophetic it was that he and his associates were making history to be read by future generations, and what glorious history it is. This history should be read and studied by our children from generation to generation. No better understanding of our constitution and the structure of our government could be gained than by studying the causes leading up to the great civil war and the consequences that followed.

On the 5th of February, 1863, the restored government was removed to Alexandria and made the seat of government for the State of Virginia. Simultaneous with the organization and establishment of the restored government of Virginia, steps were taken to form the State of West Virginia from a part of the old State.

By reorganizing the State of Virginia and giving it a legal existence, Governor Pierpont placed it within the power of the State to give its consent to the formation of the new State, thus complying with the Constitution of the United States, which says:

No new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdiction of any other State without the consent of the legislature of the State concerned.

This provision of the Constitution made it necessary to secure the consent of the State of Virginia to the division of the State, and accordingly the general assembly of the reorganized government of the State of Virginia, under proclamation of Governor Pierpont, dated April 18, 1862, was convened in extra session at Wheeling May 12 following. On the second day of the session, May 13, an act giving the consent of the legislature of the State of Virginia for the formation and erection of the new State within the jurisdiction of Virginia was passed.

In this way the consent of the State of Virginia to the formation of a new State was obtained; and the new State of West Virginia was formed, a constitution adopted, and application made for admission into the Union.

The Thirty-seventh Congress was then in session. The restored government of Virginia had five Members of the House of Representatives and two Senators. The movement to have the State admitted at that session did not succeed, because of the failure to make certain provisions in the constitution respecting slavery.

A constitutional convention was assembled February 12, 1863, which made the necessary changes in the constitution regarding slavery, and as amended it was again submitted to Congress, when the ordinance to admit West Virginia as a new State in the Union was passed, and on the 20th of April, President Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring, sixty days after the date thereof, the State of West Virginia should be admitted into the Union as a new State.

On the 20th of June, 1913, the State will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary as a State in the Union. Steps have been taken to this end. There will be thanksgivings and rejoicings by all the people within her borders for the great blessings, happiness, and prosperity the State has enjoyed from the beginning and the splendid outlook the future promises. That day should be observed and celebrated in a way to impress our people and instill in the minds of our children loyalty and affection for the State and Nation. The state and national flags should float together from every school, court-house, hall, and public place in the State. There should be expressions of joy everywhere, music, patriotic airs, processions, and every demonstration of respect made and gratitude shown to the founders of the State. Speeches should be made wherever speakers can be found to tell the story again and again of the deeds done, obstacles overcome, and sacrifices made to give to us and the unborn millions who come after us a great and rich Commonwealth. The 20th of June should be the independence day of West Virginia and made a legal holiday for all the years to come.

President Lincoln favored the creation and admission of the State of West Virginia into the Union, because he believed it

was right and in accordance with law. He favored it for another reason. Looking at the map of the Union which he was trying to preserve, he saw the success of the confederacy or the secession movement meant dividing the Northern States in twain, because the northern limit of Virginia was only about one hundred miles from the Lakes. This would have added to the unnumbered woes and disasters following the dissolution of the Union.

Governor Pierpont had good blood in his veins. He was related to the distinguished family bearing his name in New York, from which State his grandfather moved in 1770 to old Virginia, locating near Morgantown, where he built a blockhouse for protection against the Indians, and where his father and he were born.

After attending the country schools at his home, he went to Allegheny College, at Meadville, Pa., and was graduated in the year 1839. He then studied and became a lawyer, being successful both in his profession and in business.

As time goes on and the clouds of the great civil war are lifted, his deeds and great achievements will be seen with clearer vision, be better understood, and he will rank in history as one of the great men of his time.

— his triumph will be sung,
By some yet unmolded tongue
Far on in summers that we shall not see—

and unborn poets and orators will rise up to do justice to his deeds and memory. We are too close to the great events; we are still too near the shadow of the great mountain to trace its outline and know its height and grandeur.

While he was the life of the movement to restore the government of old Virginia, he was, at the same time, the soul of the greater movement to form the new State of West Virginia.

He was a man of high ideals, firm and just in his convictions, and fixed in his purposes. He was virile, forceful, insistent, and dominating. A devout member of the great Methodist Church, he was a religious man and always had within him the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. He was made of such stuff as builders of states and empires are made.

He founded a State whose people will love and bless his
memory as the suns roll on.

He loved liberty, law, order, and justice, and devoted his life
to promoting all these things and helping his fellow-man.

He chained his name to undying fame and then joined the
dead who never die. [Applause on the floor and in the galleries.]

42017-9014