

= Wyndham Robertson =

Wyndham Robertson ( January 26 , 1803 ? February 11 , 1888 ) was the Acting Governor of the U.S. state of Virginia from 1836 to 1837 . He also served twice in the Virginia House of Delegates , the second time during the American Civil War .

Robertson was a Whig , and was an advocate for Union during the secession crisis that precipitated the Civil War . However , after Lincoln 's call for troops , he advocated secession . After the war , he was a member of the Committee of Nine that helped usher Virginia back into the Union . Robertson , a descendant of Pocahontas , published a book near the end of his life in her defense , and tracing her ancestry and descendants .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and family = = =

Robertson was born near Manchester , in Chesterfield County , Virginia , the son of William Robertson and Elizabeth Bolling , a descendant of Pocahontas and John Rolfe . His father was a member of the Virginia Council of State . Robertson attended private schools in Richmond and graduated from The College of William and Mary in 1821 . He then married Mary Trigg Smith , daughter of Captain Francis Smith . Robertson 's brothers were Thomas B. Robertson , a Governor of Louisiana , and John Robertson , a U.S. Congressman . Robertson studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1824 . In 1827 , he made a short trip to Paris and London , and in 1830 he was made Councillor of State .

= = = Career = = =

Robertson was re @-@ elected to the Council of State in 1833 , and on March 31 , 1836 , he became the senior member of this body , and therefore Lieutenant @-@ Governor of Virginia . When Governor Littleton Waller Tazewell resigned that same day , Robertson became Governor . Since the Virginia Legislature , which elected the Governor , was Democratic , and he , being a Whig , was not , Robertson was not elected when his term was up in 1837 , and he was replaced by David Campbell . Robertson was then elected to the Virginia House of Delegates for the 1838 session . He was re @-@ elected for three successive sessions , ending his service in 1841 .

He moved to his wife 's home south of Abingdon , in southwest Virginia in 1841 . He was made a Justice of Washington County on July 25 , 1842 , and was appointed a trustee of Abingdon Academy in 1843 . In 1850 , he leased the King Saltworks for five years . In 1858 , he returned to Richmond . In 1859 , he was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates for the 1859 @-@ 1861 session . When Virginia was struggling with the idea of seceding from the United States , Robertson was a staunch Unionist and tried to prevent its secession . He later wrote of himself as a " friend to peace and the Union " and that he had actively opposed South Carolina 's call for a Southern Convention in 1859 . In fact , he was present at the Henry Clay banquet in April 1860 , at which former President John Tyler was present , and Robertson was called on to give " The Union " toast , which he did , followed by a short speech . He then proposed the following toast :

" The Constitutional Union of the States " - The Union of the States is the harmony of the spheres . While obedient to the laws of their creation , they sing ever as they go ' glad tidings of great joy ' to all the world . Rebelling against them , light and joy are swallowed up in darkness , and order falls back into primordial chaos .

After South Carolina and several other states started seceding in the winter of 1860 @-@ 61 , he still advocated that Virginia not follow suit . On January 7 , 1861 , he presented a resolution known as the Anti @-@ Coercion Resolution , which rejected secession , but stated that if the Federal government used coercion toward the seceded states , Virginia would fight , which was duly adopted . However , when President Abraham Lincoln made his call for troops on April 15 , 1861 ,

he was " from that time forth zealously active in all measures for the defence of his State . " The call for troops was precisely the scenario detailed in their Anti @-@ Coercion Resolution and Virginia seceded .

Robertson was re @-@ elected to the House of Delegates for the next two sessions , ending in 1865 . In 1863 , he opposed and helped to defeat a bill to fix the prices of food , which he believed was " fraught with the direst mischief " . When a committee of citizens presented a resolution asking their representatives to support a similar bill or resign , Robertson refused . When he found that his colleagues had already acquiesced , he resigned so as not to misrepresent his constituents . The House , however , requested that his resignation be withdrawn until the wishes of his constituents could be determined . A formal poll was held and it was determined that a majority did not support the bill and Robertson retained his seat .

After the war , he moved back to Abingdon . During Reconstruction , Robertson was a member of the Committee of Nine , led by Alexander H. H. Stuart , that sought Virginia 's readmission to the Union . At issue was the new state constitution , which included disenfranchisement of many white males . The committee successfully negotiated with the Federal government to have that clause voted on separately , so that Virginians would accept and ratify the new constitution and so rejoin the Union . He died on February 11 , 1888 , and was buried at Cobbs , Chesterfield County .

= = Legacy and writings = =

Robertson was an early donor to Emory and Henry College , which later endowed the Robertson prize medal for " encouraging oratory " .

After the American Civil War , Northern writers began questioning the validity of the rescue story of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas , attacking the accounts of the historical role played by both , as well as that of her husband John Rolfe . The movement was led by Henry Adams , a descendant of John Adams whose rival was John Randolph of Roanoke , a descendant of Pocahontas . Several Virginians replied , one of whom was Robertson . " Northern attacks disturbed him so much that he prepared a detailed study " and wrote Pocahontas alias Matoaka and Her Descendants through Her Marriage with John Rolfe . He traced her descendants , who included the Bollings , Branches , Lewises , Randolphs , and Pages , as well as his own family . His thesis was that because her descendants were notable , so was she . " History , poetry , and art , " wrote Robertson , " have vied with one another in investing her name from that day to the present with a halo of surpassing brightness . "

The Wyndham Robertson Library at Hollins University is dedicated to Robertson .