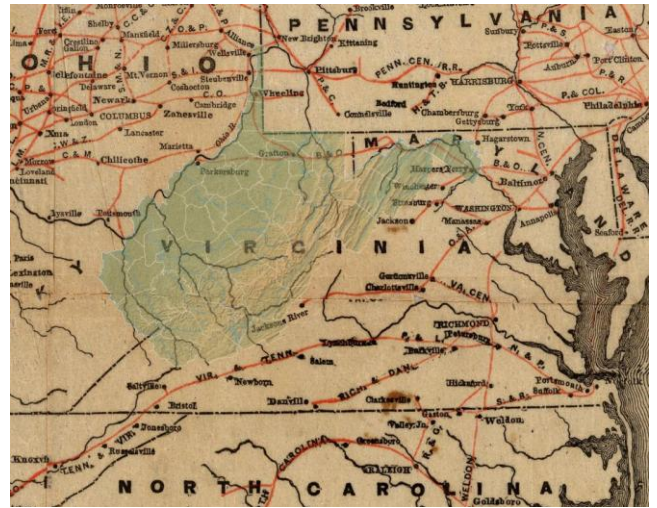


## Western Virginia Becomes West Virginia

Prior to 1863, there was no West Virginia, only an area of land which was part of Virginia.

Conditions in western Virginia were entirely unlike those in the eastern portion of the state. As early as the American Revolution, there was a movement to create a separate state, and a petition for the establishment of "Westsylvania" was presented to the newly formed U.S. Congress, on the grounds that the mountains presented an almost impassable barrier to the east. The rugged nature of the country made slavery unprofitable, and time only increased the differences between the two sections of Virginia.



The terms **tuckahoe** and **cohee** were used during the 18th and 19th centuries to describe two contrasting cultural groups in the Virginia and Carolina areas of the United States. "Tuckahoe" refers to the low-country, slave-owning plantation owners, who mostly came from England.



The "cohee" were typically poor, non-slave-owning, independent farmers, largely

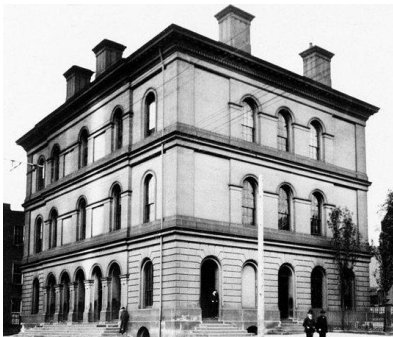
Scotch-Irish and Pennsylvania German families, who migrated south and west in search of cheap land.



By the time of the Civil War, some writers were describing the sectionalism of American politics as the conflict between 3 different cultures: "**yankee**", representing mercantile New England, "**tuckahoe**", the slave-owning southern plantation owners, and "**cohee**", the western self-reliant pioneer.



Residents of western Virginia were discontented for years with their position in Virginia, as the government was dominated by the planter elite of the eastern areas. They were generally less supportive of slavery, although many counties were divided on their support. The residents of this area became more sharply divided after Virginia voted to secede from the Union at the start of the Civil War.



Residents of the western and northern counties, meeting in Wheeling in May and June 1861, set up a separate government under Francis Pierpont, and voted to separate from Virginia.

This choice was far from unanimous.

The new state of West Virginia was admitted to the Union in 1863.

