

ANDREWS, William H. (b. ca. 1839), member of the Convention of 1867–1868, reportedly had been a schoolteacher in New Jersey before he came to Virginia. Newspaper accounts described him as a mulatto. No other evidence has come to light on his origins or activities prior to 22 October 1867, when he easily defeated George T. Clarke in racially polarized voting to choose a delegate to a state constitutional convention from Isle of Wight and Surry Counties. Clarke won the votes of only four blacks in the two counties, while Andrews received a single white vote in each county. In the convention Andrews served on the Committee on the Pardoning Power but otherwise did not play a significant role, although he rarely missed a session. After voting generally with the Radicals, he shifted his stance and became the only African American delegate to vote against the new constitution, an erratic and unexplained course that prefigured his disastrous term in the legislature.

Whatever his constituents thought of his convention votes, Andrews remained prominent in Surry County, where he was one of several men appointed on 4 June 1869 as registrars for the coming statewide election. Soon thereafter he received the Republican Party's nomination to the lower house of the General Assembly and defeated William Dillard by seventy-eight votes on 6 July.

In the House of Delegates, Andrews was appointed to the standing Committees on Propositions and Grievances and on Manufactures and Mechanic Arts, and political observers no doubt expected him to serve quietly and vote with the Republican minority. Andrews was an alcoholic, however, and Richmond provided far more opportunities for dissipation than did Surry County. He took advantage of them and soon showed himself to be dangerous when drunk. On 5 March 1870 city policemen arrested

him on charges of drunk and disorderly conduct and assault. Two days later the House assigned a committee to investigate the charges, and after reporting that Andrews had admitted his guilt it recommended a reprimand from the Speaker. After some debate, the House tabled the committee's report.

Less than two weeks later William Henry Brisby and other African American delegates charged that Andrews had struck a House page with a whip and called for his expulsion. After other delegates questioned the severity of the punishment, on 22 March Andrews made a public apology to the House and accepted a reprimand from the Speaker. One newspaper reporter stated that he immediately left the chamber, drew his pay, and departed for the saloons.

Andrews conclusively burned his political bridges on 25 March 1870 by calling for the expulsion of two of his accusers. One of them, George Fayerman, of Petersburg, reported to the House on 23 April that Andrews had been jailed in that city four days earlier for drunkenness and for firing a pistol in a public place. Despite seemingly universal agreement about Andrews's incapacity while under the influence of alcohol, Fayerman's proposal that he be expelled was tabled.

Andrews apparently then hired William Grey to accompany him on his nightly rounds and to bring him home safely, but Grey soon tired of his unpleasant duty. In mid-June Andrews charged him with theft. Testimony given later suggested that he intended the accusation to scare Grey into remaining in his employ. In quick succession Andrews dropped the charge, brought and dropped it a second time, and then made the charge yet again. His patience finally gone, the justice of the peace accused Andrews of perjury. On 30 June 1870 the Richmond mayor's court agreed and sent him to jail without bail.

In response Andrews hired G. D. Wootton, an attorney who petitioned the legislature about this outrage against a sitting member (although, in fact, legislators could be jailed on felony charges). Perhaps in response, the judge then set bail at \$500. Thoroughly discredited, Andrews returned to the legislature and to his wastrel ways while his case hung fire. In January 1871, as the legislature settled into protracted debate over bills presented by competing railroad interests, members objected to Andrews's equally protracted absence from the House. When he offered a physician's note certifying his ill health, they dropped the inquiry.

One month later, on 21 February 1871, Wootton finally obtained a *nolle prosequi* judgment on the perjury charge. The attorney later testified that he did so in return for a promise by Andrews to vote in favor of the construction of a railroad from Washington to Richmond, a measure favored by the Pennsylvania Central Railroad and opposed by William Mahone's Atlantic, Mississippi, and Ohio Railroad. Lobbyists for the contending interests swarmed the halls of the Virginia State Capitol, and rumors of bribery circulated widely enough that the House appointed a committee to investigate them.

N. J. Hinton, an Irish-born Radical and formerly a doorkeeper at the constitutional convention, saw an opportunity to make money as a broker of bribes on behalf of the Pennsylvania interests and approached several legislators. Some of them, he testified, had already sold their votes, others said that they could obtain more money elsewhere, and some refused a bribe entirely. Only Andrews accepted his offer (never mentioning that he had already pledged to vote for the bill). After Andrews failed to supply Hinton's fee for brokering the bribe, he went to Andrews, whom he believed had already been paid. Andrews denied that he had received his bribe money and, foolishly, wrote a letter of complaint for Hinton to carry

back to his employers. The legislative committee investigating rumors of corruption called Hinton to testify, and he gave it Andrews's letter.

The latter indiscretion, not corruption, distinguished Andrews from his peers. Observers then and now agree that the assorted railroad interests distributed vast quantities of alcohol, cash, and other favors to corral legislators. The newspapers predicted that under the circumstances nothing would come of the legislative inquiry, but Andrews's letter, coupled with his weak defense that he had viewed the offered cash merely as a generous gift, made his action impossible to ignore. On 29 March 1871, the final day of the session, legislators once again introduced a resolution calling for his expulsion, and once again the House voted to table it.

From the beginning of his troubles with the law, Andrews's fellow African American legislators were his most outspoken critics and as a group would have readily voted to expel him. The white Conservative majority obviously preferred the erratic and often absent Andrews to a more competent Radical legislator who might have taken his place, and it therefore voted to protect him from punishment. William H. Andrews disappears from the records after 1871. Perhaps he went elsewhere, reformed, and led a productive life. Given his past, it seems likelier that he went swiftly to a bad end.

Approximate birth date inferred from age in Census, Richmond City, 1870; Richard G. Lowe, "Virginia's Reconstruction Convention: General Schofield Rates the Delegates," *VMHB* 80 (1972): 358; Richard L. Hume, "The Membership of the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867–1868: A Study of the Beginnings of Congressional Reconstruction in the Upper South," *VMHB* 86 (1978): 481; *Documents of 1867–1868 Convention*, 129; *Journal of 1867–1868*

Convention; JHD, 1869–1870 and 1870–1871 sess.; Allen W. Moger, "Railroad Practices and Politics in Virginia after the Civil War," *VMHB* 59 (1951): 438–441; Jack P. Maddex Jr., *The Virginia Conservatives*,

1867–1879: A Study in Reconstruction Politics (1970), 150–155; scrapes with law and legislature documented in *Richmond Dispatch*, *Richmond Whig*, and *Petersburg Daily Index*.

Source: Kneebone, John T., "Andrews, William H." In *The Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, Vol. 1, edited by John T. Kneebone et al., 171–173. Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1998.



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