

**Honor and Duty to God and State:
John Janney and the Virginia Secession Convention**

James W. Finck

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James I Robertson, Chair
William C. Davis
Hayward Farrar

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(ABSTRACT)

Henry Clay once called John Janney the “first man of Virginia.” Janney sat as the President of the Virginia Secession Convention, a meeting that would help decide the fate of the United States. The story of Janney is crucial to American history because the entire nation watched the convention to see which way Virginia would side. Janney’s story can also help answer two questions that have long plagued civil war historians: why the South or Virginia seceded, and why southerners fought in the war.

Janney was a staunch Unionist, and fought to stay in the Union until the end. Both times the Convention voted on the question of secession, he voted against it. However, in the end, when Virginia seceded Janney stayed loyal to his state. His insights give a rare look into the Convention proceedings, and human reaction to the outcomes.