

A SESQUICENTENNIAL ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆ MOMENT

JANUARY 18-24, 1863

Women not only served as nurses and spies during the Civil War. Sometimes they took up arms to join men in battle. Mary Jane Prater was one of those women.

Prater was a young cavalry soldier fighting for the Confederacy who was captured in Charleston on Jan. 22, 1863.

Major Joseph Darr, who was the provost marshal of Virginia, interviewed Prater while she was in jail. The 17-year-old girl told Darr she was a native of Tennessee and was raised by an aunt who ran a millinery in Cincinnati.

Prater said she left Cincinnati in the fall of 1862, and met two members of the 2nd West Virginia Cavalry, who persuaded her “to put

on Soldier’s clothes and enlist in their company.”

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* described Prater as “sportive in her manner, and considering all things was very much unconcerned. She is evidently well versed in the wickedness of the world for one so young.”

Even though women weren’t legally allowed to fight in the Civil War, hundreds of women did.

This sesquicentennial moment is brought to you by the West Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, Archives and History Section.

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