

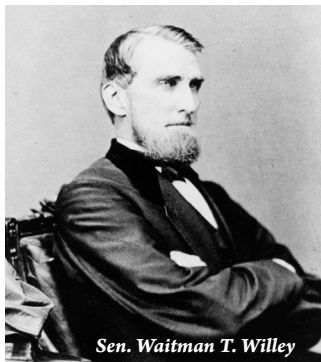
A SESQUICENTENNIAL ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆ MOMENT

**JUNE 29 -
JULY 5, 1862**

The fate of up to 9,000 slaves living in what would become West Virginia led to a contentious debate in the U.S. Senate 150 years ago this week.

On July 1, 1862, senators debated a provision in West Virginia's proposed statehood bill that would free all children born of slaves after July 3, 1863.

Restored Government of Virginia Sen. Waitman T. Willey pushed for gradual emancipation. He argued that



Sen. Waitman T. Willey

young slaves wouldn't know how to take care of themselves and old family servants "who have the love and attachment of their masters" would likely become homeless. He also maintained that most adult slaves living within the borders of the proposed state already had been sold to the South.

Sen. Benjamin Wade of Ohio wanted to free all slaves once they reached a certain age while Sen. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts argued for immediate emancipation for all slaves.

Restored Government of Virginia Sen. John S. Carlile wanted a statewide election.

The debate ended without a consensus.

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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