

A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

JULY 27 - AUG. 2, 1862

Perhaps no one in West Virginia was better at charming information out of Union soldiers than Miss Belle Boyd of Martinsburg.

A letter that was reprinted July 26, 1862, in the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* describes Belle as a “resolute black eyed vixen.”

“Her acknowledged superiority for machination and intrigue has given her the leadership and control of the female spies in the Valley of Virginia,” reads the letter written by *The Philadelphia Inquirer’s* Army correspondent in Front Royal, Va.

Although Boyd was only in her 20s, the letter says she “has passed the freshness of youth. She is a sharp-featured, black-

eyed woman of 25, or care and intrigue have given her that appearance.”



The letter writer also notes that nearly every lieutenant and captain courted Boyd the year before when Union Gen. Robert Patterson’s army was in Martinsburg. Boyd was a master at getting them to disclose information about troop strength and locations.

The correspondent concludes with a warning. “This woman has been of immense service to the enemy. She will be now if she can.”

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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