

A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

DEC. 22-28, 1861

Considering the high level of military activity occurring in western Virginia during the early days of the Civil War, the storage of active munitions in any city was a dangerous prospect.

So on Christmas Eve in 1861, Union Gen. William Rosecrans and Restored Government of Virginia Gov. Francis Pierpont were summoned to appear before a federal court in Wheeling to explain why powder kegs and other munitions were being stored in Wheeling's Custom House.

Officials were not only concerned about an accidental explosion, but they worried that their mere presence could make the city an even more attractive target for invasion.

Collector of Customs Thomas Hornbrook told the court he

stored the munitions there on orders from Rosecrans.

Rosecrans said his order was to store fixed ammunition there, but not gun powder.

Ultimately, the court ordered the powder kegs removed, but not the fixed ammunition.



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

For more information, visit www.wvculture.org