

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

JANUARY 4-10, 1863

Days after President Lincoln authorized West Virginia's quest for statehood, Union and Confederate forces embarked on separate missions to capture as many prisoners as possible to use as leverage in prisoner of war exchanges.

The Jan. 4, 1863, abduction of Barbour County Sheriff James Trahorn prompted Restored Government of Virginia Gov. Francis H. Pierpont to ask lawmakers to authorize the arrest of all "distinguished secessionists." He hoped to use the prisoners to secure Trahorn's and other prisoners' release.

Within days of Trahorn's capture, a cavalry led by Maj. John Showalter and Capt. Lot Bowen arrested eight secessionists the Union hoped to use as pawns.

In Richmond, lawmakers offered \$1,000 rewards for each captured Union soldier.

Confederate Gen. John Imboden and Union Gen. Robert H. Milroy exchanged a series of communications containing escalating threats of carrying out retaliatory executions if their demands were not met. During one exchange, Milroy taunted Imboden by saying, "I notice that the Confederate Government is about to offer \$100,000 for my head. Had you not better come down to Winchester and go into the speculation?"

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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