

A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

OCT. 13-19, 1861

Because many municipal leaders left to join either war effort, towns and counties often descended into lawlessness during the Civil War.

Whatever sense of calm a town enjoyed usually was maintained by whichever army happened to occupy an area at any given time.

Loose government control meant that communities were sometimes left to their own defense. While guerilla bands formed to fight for the Union or Confederacy in an unaffiliated capacity,

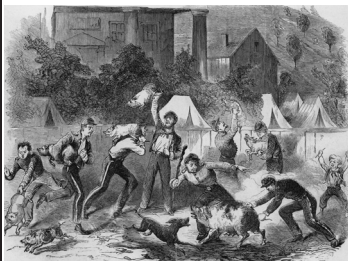
those same groups could also become outlaws that preyed upon civilians.

In the case of Virginia, towns that continually switched from Union to Confederate occupancy also switched from being governed by Richmond or Wheeling.

A proclamation Union Colonel J.V. Guthrie issued on Oct. 17 while stationed in Charleston pleads with residents to regain control of their town.

“I found you here without either municipal, State, or United States law... I now solicit you to organize, and come back at once to the sweet paths of industry and peace.”

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



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