

# A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

SEPTEMBER 15-21, 1861

Preston County resident John W. Overman's loyalty was challenged in 1861, when Confederate troops arrested and charged him with giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

After spending nearly three weeks digging graves by day and sleeping in a cell by night, Overman pleaded for his release in a Sept. 15 letter to Confederate States of America President Jefferson Davis. He also asked for the return of his horse "or his value."

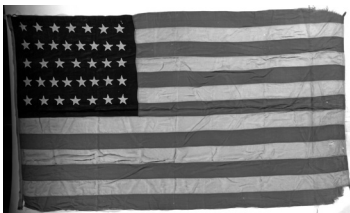
"Sir, I am a Virginian, and am proud to say that I have always been loyal to my native State, and am still willing to remain so," he says in his letter.

Overman tells the president that "the best men" of Tucker and Preston counties could attest to his loyalty, but he has no way to communicate with them.



Col. John B. Baldwin tells a slightly different story about Overman's loyalties. He says Overman "was a Union man until his arrest, but has since changed and is now willing to stand by the South."

It's difficult to say, but it is worth noting that a John W. Overman from Hardy County would join McNeill's Partisan Rangers, a Confederate group, in 1863, and in 1865, he and his wife Lydia named their newborn son Robert E. L. Overman.



*This sesquicentennial moment is brought to you by the Archives & History Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.*

*Photos Courtesy of State Archives*

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