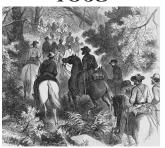


FEBRUARY 1-7, 1863



Horses were a valuable commodity during the Civil War because they carried supplies, weapons, men and messages, but like the men who fought alongside them, they were not immune to the perils of war.

In early February 1863, Assistant Quartermaster Capt. W.R. Downing in Wheeling was assigned the arduous task of nursing back to health more than 40 worn-out, sick and injured horses.

"We never before saw such a melancholy, ghostly looking lot of skeletons," the Wheeling Intelligencer said in a story published Feb. 4, 1863. "The Gothic steed Pegasus ... was a gay and frisky courser in comparison with the best of these forty scare-crows.

"Their sides looked like washboards and their ribs can be counted as far as they can be seen. Their backs were scarred and their limbs and bodies were covered with wounds, sores and running corruptions. They have evidently been beaten, driven, ridden, and starved without mercy and 'regardless of expense."

The newspaper said if Downing "succeeds in bringing anything in the shape of a horse out of a single one of the miserable brutes under consideration, he will indeed be a magician."

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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