A SESQUICENTENNIAL
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★ MOMENT

JUNE 30-JULY 6, 1861

July 4, 1861, was "perhaps the most interesting and thrilling Fourth ever celebrated in the mountains of Western Virginia," wrote a Union soldier in camp near Philippi. Throughout the Northern Panhandle and near Philippi, the Fourth of July was celebrated with traditional fanfare: processions, speeches, readings of the Declaration of Independence, music, and fireworks.

Yet, even on the Fourth of July, the war was an ever-present reality. A Confederate company skirmished with a larger Union force at Harpers Ferry. Federal troops, who had captured Martinsburg on the third, placed the U.S. flag on the courthouse. Also on this day, Confederate spy Belle Boyd reportedly shot a drunken Union soldier who had insulted her mother while trying to place a flag on the Boyd house.

Meanwhile, Virginia's Unionist representatives John Carlile and Kellian Whaley took their seats in Congress after President Lincoln called upon congressional leaders to take action.

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Photo Courtesy of State Archives

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

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