

A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

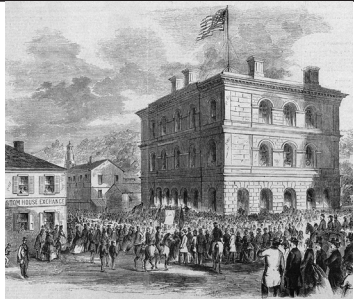
**AUG. 31 -
SEPT. 6, 1862**

On Sept. 3, 1862, burglars attempted to steal \$1.25 million from the vault at the U.S. Custom House in Wheeling, but they were unsuccessful.

The thieves couldn't break through the vault's 14-inch brick wall that was reinforced with a layer of crossed and riveted iron bars firmly imbedded in cement.

According to the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, the burglars "set to work with crowbar and chisel to dig a hole through the only exposed side." They made a large hole in the wall, but "the iron still remained and could not be removed."

Police speculated that the burglars had hidden inside the building during the day and



waited until the employees went home to try to crack open the vault.

The *Intelligencer* also reported that the burglary was committed by men "perfectly familiar with the whole building and perfectly cognizant of the location of the money and the means by which to get it."

The thieves left behind a crowbar, three chisels, a handkerchief and a bottle containing "one good drink of whiskey."

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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