

# A SESQUICENTENNIAL MOMENT

SEPTEMBER 22-28, 1861

In western Virginia, where loyalties were more divided than in many parts of the country, garnering public support for the war was particularly challenging.

During a Sept. 25 meeting at the Athenium in Wheeling, the “father of West Virginia,” Francis Pierpont, stressed the importance of such support.

“The war is upon us,” he told the hundreds gathered there. “We must meet the crisis. There is work for all, and he who hangs back and does nothing is no better than a traitor.”

Efforts were already under way to complete the organization of the First (West) Virginia Infantry for three years of service, and money was being raised to support those efforts, which included a plan to assist the families of volunteers.

The First (West) Virginia Infantry was organized successfully in the fall of 1861. Early in the war, enlistments from Ohio and Pennsylvania helped fill the ranks of units from western Virginia. West Virginia reportedly struggled later to meet some federal quotas for Union soldiers because of the numbers assigned to counties not firmly under Union control.

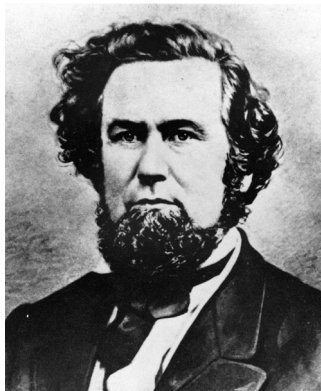


Photo Courtesy of State Archives

*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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