

'Brown County War' was short-lived fray during Civil War

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The turbulent year had another event that may have encouraged Southern sympathizers in Brown County. Confederate General John Morgan made an abortive raid into Indiana, but the military man discovered that there weren't as many "Southerners" as he had been led to believe. When he learned that some 100,000 homefront volunteers were massing at Indianapolis and preparing to march against him, he decided to try the hospitality of Ohio.

The Brown County history refers to one incident as the "Brown County War." It happened during a time when meetings were still being held to argue the merits of the war.

According to the history, two parties had been hunting in the woods in the north part of the county. One group was a detachment of soldiers, who were beating the bushes for a deserter or two. The other hunting party, Lewis Prosser and a companion, were hunting squirrels.

The men all converged at yet another mass meeting called to discuss the war. Prosser, who had been accused of "disloyalty," was asked to speak, but declined. Whatever his sympathies, he apparently

wasn't willing to express them in front of the Union Army soldiers.

One of the latter, who had been drinking, took offense at Prosser's bringing a rifle to the meeting. The soldier also claimed that he overheard the Brown Countian saying something offensive to the people gathered around him.

The "war" must have lasted only a few seconds. As the county history describes it, the soldier "... twisted the weapon from his (Prosser's) hands. Prosser instantly drew a revolver and shot the soldier dead and turned to leave the ground, but as he did so was shot by one of the bystanders in the leg and brought to the ground. Prosser afterward died from the effects of his wound."

Two or three other shots were fired, and the "war" was over as quickly as it began. But the sudden violence was an indication of strong feelings generated by the war between the states.

Indiana University Professors John Barnhart and Donald Carmo-ny's *Indiana from Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* relates that some of the violence in Indiana during the Civil War was associated with Army recruiting. Ironically, in the Army call of 1863, Brown County came up with 35 men recruited in the Nashville area.